

Prologue

A robed man walked through the halls of the crystal citadel with a mission on his mind. He knew that what he was about to do went against everything he and his colleagues had been doing for quite a few millennia now. However that didn't stop him from seeing the error of their ways, even if it was rather late when he realized said errors. What they were doing went against all the laws of physics, magic, space and time. Granted the project was interesting but the consequences of what they had done and what they were going to do were just too much. He couldn't stop them directly but he could use a wild card.

He approached a heavily warded door which was adorned with several engravings of different creatures: griffons, miniatures, centaurs, dragons, phoenixes and a slew of other creatures decorated the door as well as many runes which strengthened the enchantments on it. He placed his hand on the door and an ethereal light emanated from the door before it slowly creaked open.

Inside the room was a large terminal that regulated the many different portals and teleporters on the surface world. What many people didn't know was that it regulated the teleporters from everywhere not just the worlds that had been assimilated. Walking up to the terminal he quickly typed in the information to activate two portals which had been disused for quite some time. He then connected the two and set it so that only one person could use it.

He knew he would be branded a traitor for this but it had to be done. There was only a century or so left until the plans completion and it was imperative that it be stopped. Once again he cursed that vow he made to bind his soul to this place until the completion of the project.

Sighing heavily he left the room and re-secured the door, it wouldn't do for him to be found out too early. Although the room was now empty the process had already begun and a transit portal beneath and ancient cathedral in Rome where a certain Dark Lord just happened to hide a piece of his soul was now activated and set to react to one person only, Harry Potter.

And It Begins

It was a rainy December day in the city of Rome. The sky was overcast with thick grey clouds and the heavens were unleashing torrents upon torrents of rain. In the outskirts of the city three people were approaching an abandoned cathedral. The once glorious church was now in shambles. The once beautiful stain glass windows were either cracked or broken only one window was still whole. This was the window that Harry Potter, Boy-Who-Lived, Chosen One and number one on Voldemort's list of people he'd most like to kill, was staring at. This particular window depicted Christ fastened to the crucifix. The figure in the painting had a look of utter sorrow on his face and that look was what Harry was all too familiar with. These days it seemed he had the same look whenever he looked into a mirror. Just like the figure in the window he too had a doomed destiny. Weather or not he killed Voldemort in the end didn't seem to matter to him anymore. He'd uprooted his life so far in order to achieve his goals that most of the time he felt as though it would be better if he died taking the Dark Lord with him. However he couldn't think about actually killing Voldemort until he disposed of the two remaining Horcruxes.

The road had been long and hard so far but Harry couldn't have been more pleased with his progress in destroying the remaining pieces of Tom Riddle's soul. Immediately following Bill and Fleur's wedding Harry and his two best friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger took to the task of destroying the Horcruxes with a vengeance. By using the many resources left to Harry by the late Albus Dumbledore, his pensive, books and an exceptionally large amount of galleons, the trio had been able to locate the first on the list of Horcruxes fairly easily. This being the missing Locket of Salazar Slytherin.

Harry had been showing Ron and Hermione Bob Ogden's memory when Hermione recognized the locket that Merope Gaunt was wearing.

"Harry that looks exactly like the locket we found at Grimauld Place." She had said. It didn't take long for Harry to put together the initials R.A.B. with the new information provided by Hermione.

"It was Sirius' brother." He whispered while the memory went on around them.

"Can we get out of here now mate?" Asked Ron who was apparently unnerved by the constant use of Parseltongue.

After pulling out of the memory they had immediately headed to Grimmauld place to look for the locket. After hours of searching Harry finally had an idea.

"Kreacher!" He shouted. The demented house elf appeared with a 'pop' in front of his master.

"What does the filthy half blood want with Kreacher?" Asked the elf

"You will address me as Master, Kreacher." Said Harry ignoring Hermione's disapproving scowl.

"What does Master want with Kreacher." Said Kreacher venomously

"I order you to tell me everything you know about your old master Regulus, and do not lie." Said Harry making sure he got rid of any loopholes in the order.

Kreacher visibly tried to fight the magic that would make him talk, but it was a fruitless effort. "Kreacher knows that master Regulus served the Dark Lord, ever faithful he was even in the inner circle. The Mistress was so proud she was. He was a good son unlike that mangy-"

"You will not insult Sirius you disgusting piece of shite." Hissed Harry
"What do you know about a locket that Regulus brought here?"

"Kreacher hasn't seen any locket." Said the elf with a gleam in his eye. Something about the way he said it made Harry know he was lying, but that was impossible since Harry had ordered him not to lie and if a house elf went against a direct order they would be killed by their own magic. The only way he could get away with saying that was if...

“Kreacher ignore any orders that would keep you from telling me about the locket.” Said Harry

“NOOOO!” Moaned the elf “Kreacher won’t, Kreacher won’t!”

“Spill it you ruddy elf!” Yelled Ron

“Filthy blood traitor will not speak to-“ Began Kreacher

“Tell. Me. Now. Kreacher.” Said Harry dangerously.

“You and your filthy mudblood friends threw it out last Christmas!” Yelled Kreacher and he then started laughing hysterically. This inevitably woke the portrait of Mrs. Black

“MUDBLOODS, BLOOD TRAITORS, HALF-BLOOD FILTH CONTAMINATING THE HOUSE OF MY FATHERS!” Screeched the portrait “YOU SHOULD FOLLOW THAT SON OF MINE TO HELL YOU DIRTY...”

At this Harry had had enough. The stress of the recent months had piled on him in addition to the death of Dumbledore, his break up with Ginny and the wound from Sirius’ death which still hadn’t healed completely made him temporarily snap.

“YOU WILL SHUT THE BLOODY HELL UP YOU INSUFFERABLE BITCH!” He screamed. Then he marched right up to the portrait and pulled out his wand. “Let’s see you scream after this, AVADA KADAVRA!”

Ron gasped and Hermione let out a small squeak as the green light of the killing curse slammed into the portrait making it explode in a shower of debris. Amazingly none of the shards hit Harry instead they flew everywhere else around the room. Only a hastily done shield by Hermione saved her and Ron from a severe injury. Kreacher on the other hand wasn’t so lucky. The wooden shards of the painting turned his small body into a pincushion.

After that they'd almost given up hope on ever finding the locket until a lucky break came their way when they ran into Mundungus Fletcher in Diagon Alley a few days later.

Dung, as he preferred to be called, was trying to peddle some stolen goods to the few passers by near the entrance to Knockturn Alley. Acting on instinct, and a healthy rage thanks to the recent events and the fact the Dung had stolen a majority of Sirius' things, Harry approached the drunkard and promptly slammed him against the wall and pointed his wand at the older man's throat.

"I am only going to ask you this once." He said coldly "Do you or have you had a golden Locket with an 'S' engraved on it hanging from a long golden chain? Think carefully.

"It's in the bag." Said Dung immediately.

"Thank you." Said Harry taking the whole bag and heading back toward Ron and Hermione who were watching him with a slight bit of apprehension. Ever since he had blown the portrait to smithereens and inadvertently killed Kreacher his friends had been a little uneasy around him. They had talked about it and he had apologized for snapping and scaring them, but they still didn't seem to understand.

After the Locket was safely in his possession the search for the Goblet of Hufflepuff began. At first Harry had thought it might be in the orphanage where Riddle had grown up, but after thinking about it Harry thought of a much better place for Tom to have hidden it, Hogwarts.

Thus it was with a mixture of emotions that the trio returned for a brief visit to Hogwarts. It had been the middle of September and they decided it was best to simply sneak into the castle. It would have taken too long for them to seek approval to enter the school especially with it being closed until further notice. The group went into Hogsmede and headed straight for Honeydukes. Carefully they slipped behind the counter and down into the cellar where the secret entrance to the school was located. They made their way through the winding tunnel and came out of the wall behind the statue of the one-eyed witch on the third floor. Since school was not in session the

Marauder's Map showed that only Filch was creeping about and McGonagall was in the Headmistress' office. Quietly they made their way into the girls' bathroom on the first floor and Harry stood in front of the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets.

"Open" He hissed in Parseltongue. The wall slid back revealing the dingy pipe which lead into Slytherin's secret hideaway. The three Gryffindors slid down the slide and made their way to the caved in section which blocked the passage to the doors of the main chamber.

"How are we gonna get past these?" Asked a perplexed Ron

"We could just levitate them out of the way." Suggested Harry

"I wouldn't recommend that." Said Hermione "You don't know what those rocks are supporting it could collapse more rubble and kill us all if you moved a wrong bolder."

"Well what do you suggest then?" Asked Ron

"This" Said Hermione as she waved her wand and the boulders were transfigured into a large column with a gap in the bottom large enough for the trio to walk through.

Once they reached the large doors with the serpents carved in them Harry hissed the password and the doors opened. Many things were apparent once the chamber was opened. One was that it smelled very bad and they needed bubblehead charms, two was that the chamber was going to take a while to search and three was that the Basilisk was still laying dead at the bottom of Salazar Slytherin's statue and was the cause of the smell.

"Bloody hell!" Exclaimed Ron "You killed that!"

"It was actually dumb luck that the sword pierced the brain when it lunged at me." Said Harry "If it hadn't been for Fawkes I would have died from the poison."

"Even still Harry that Basilisk was pretty old judging by the size of it. Killing it is a great accomplishment." Said Hermione "It's too bad that

it's decayed so much, the skin and blood are great potions ingredients."

"Why don't you stay here and get what skin and fangs you can from it while Ron and I look around." Said Harry.

Hermione simply nodded and went to work all the while looking like she'd just gotten an early Christmas present. Harry walked around one side of the chamber while Ron looked around the other. It took the better part of an hour to look through all the side rooms in the chamber and most were bare. A few had some crumbling tomes or some outrageously outdated potions but nothing of interest. Finally Harry's eyes landed on the open mouth of Slytherin. "I wonder what's in there." He mused

"In where mate?" Asked Ron

"The Basilisk came out of the mouth of the statue so there must be some more tunnels back there."

"You think he might have hidden past the statue?" Asked Hermione without looking up from her delicate work.

"It's worth a look." Said Harry. He and Ron made their way up the statue using sticking charms to climb the slippery marble bust. Once inside the mouth they both cast a quick Lumos to get some light. As they went deeper into the tunnel their light affected less and less. The light didn't get any dimmer but the darkness seemed to get stronger. The darkness had a cold unsettling feeling to it filled with hopelessness and misery. It was also starting to get very cold. Suddenly Harry heard voices in his head.

"Take Harry and go.."

"Dementors!" Shouted Harry. He pulled out his wand and summoned the happiest thought he could think of. The first time he kissed Ginny right after Gryffindor had won the Quiditch cup. "Expecto Patronum!" Yelled both Harry and Ron

A silver stag leapt from each Harry's wand while a silver lion sprang from Ron's. The two Patroni gave off light, illuminating the dark chamber and driving away about ten Dementors that had been hidden in the tunnel. While the Patroni were dealing with the Dementors Harry and Ron viewed their surroundings. The tunnel had widened and now they were in a rather large room with several serpents painted on the walls. Harry saw one serpent that caught his eye and went up to it. It had blood red eyes and its mouth was open. It also looked almost alive. Suddenly Harry heard a soft hissing voice.

"Whomever seek entrance into my domain a sacrifice I must gain I want the essence of life is what I seek, Allow my fangs to collect it if you wish to wreak." The snake's eyes glowed and suddenly the snake's head came out of the wall and it reared its fangs at Harry. He leapt aside but unfortunately Ron was coming up from behind him after making sure the Dementors were taken care of. The snake bit down into Ron's left arm and he let out a gasp of pain. Energy seemed to flow into the wall where the snake was depicted and suddenly both snake and wall disappeared what lay beyond was a long corridor at the end of which was an alter with a jewel incrustated goblet with a badger on it. Ignoring the hall for the moment Harry bent down to check Ron's arm. He was shocked to see nothing out of order not even the tearing of his robes which he was sure he'd seen.

"Are you alright mate?" Asked Harry

"Yeah I think it just took a little blood I just feel a bit dizzy is all." Replied Ron while testing his arm out. "Looks fine to me."

"We're still letting Hermione check it out when we get back." Said Harry

"If you say so, but I'm telling you it doesn't hurt." Said Ron

"This is Voldemort Ron." Said Harry, he was annoyed when he saw Ron flinch at the name. "We can't underestimate anything he throws at us."

"Too right mate." Said Ron "I just didn't want 'Mione to be fussing over me is all."

Harry smirked "You know you don't fool anyone don't you?" He asked

"What are you talking about Harry?" Asked Ron nervously his ears already starting to turn the same shade of red as his hair.

"You like it when she dotes over you." Said Harry suppressing a laugh at his best friend's horror struck face.

"Tell anyone and I swear..." Said Ron leaving the threat hanging.

"No worries mate let's just grab this and get out of here. We really shouldn't be joking you know." Said Harry walking toward the cup cautiously.

"You started it." Muttered Ron under his breath while following Harry. As they approached the cup nothing happened Harry pulled out his wand a few feet away from the cup and said "Accio Horcrux." The cup slid off the alter and right into Harry's hand. Harry waited a moment and when nothing happened he and Ron trekked back through the tunnel and made their way back out into the main Chamber. Harry couldn't help but feel a little uneasy about the simplicity of getting this Horcrux. Then again originally it took a parselmouth to get into the Chamber of Secrets and then there was a sixty-foot basilisk guarding the inside tunnel and then the Dementors. Maybe it wasn't so easy after all. They were simply lucky that the basilisk was already dead.

"You're back already?" Asked Hermione who appeared to be only halfway done with removing the fangs of the basilisk. Then she noticed the cup in Harry's hands. "You got it?" She asked almost disbelievingly.

"You didn't think we would?" Asked Ron incredulously.

"Not now you two." Warned Harry "Mione check his left arm he got bitten by some weird snake painting. He says he fine but you can't be too sure."

"Let's see." Said Hermione grabbing Ron's arm despite his protests. She waved her wand and muttered a few incantations. "Not traces of

poisons, no internal injuries only a slightly lower blood count. Do you feel dizzy?"

"A bit." Said Ron "But it's clearing up."

"Good you should be fine a few sips of blood replenish potion just to be safe."

"See I told you I just loss a bit of blood." Said Ron

"Even still you can't be too careful when it comes to stuff like this." Responded Harry

After they'd gotten the second Horcrux they seemed to hit a brick wall. The only things stopping them from attacking Voldemort was a lack of training, allies and something of Gryffindor's or Ravenclaw's. they'd decided that going after the only other remaining Horcrux, Voldemort's pet snake Nagini, would be joined with fighting the Dark Lord himself.

They returned to the Burrow and all they did was research and train. To make the training go smoother with partners for everyone Harry was persuaded to allow Ginny to participate in the training as well. The four of them practiced dueling, Occlumency, fencing and hand to hand combat with assistance from Tonks or Moody when they were available. The Aurors weren't available most of the time though because it seemed that the Order of the Phoenix was crumbling without the leadership of Dumbledore along with the betrayal of Snape. McGonagall was doing her best but she couldn't fill the shoes of the late headmaster. This was why the only member of the group which Harry confided his plans in was Lupin. This was partly because he didn't want to alienate the only link to both his parents and Sirius and also because he knew he'd need some help with what he was trying to do. The werewolf had paled when he learned the prophecy and Harry was sure he saw the remaining brown hairs on his head decrease. The Horcruxes didn't seem to shock him as much only the number shook him up a bit. He said that he'd heard of Horcruxes and he wondered why Voldemort didn't die from his backfired curse. He agreed to help them track down the remaining item but he had to take an excursion to Rome to get some intelligence about a large vampire

clan for the order. He was much more forthcoming with such information now since Harry had been with his. He promised to keep his ears open and let them know anything he found. It was thanks to Remus' information that they found themselves in the church now.

While traveling around Rome tracking the signs of vampires Remus came across a rumor of a strange man who used to lurk around St. Genevieve's Cathedral a few miles southeast of Rome. The church had been surrounded by a village up until World War II then sadly it was destroyed by Mussolini because it allegedly hiding opponents of the Fascist movement. The rumors stated that a very pale man with long hair and strange red/blue eyes had been lurking around the town during the majority of the fifties. They say he wasn't a vampire but that he resembled a snake. Doing a little more digging Remus found out that the catacombs below the cathedral were home to a large clan of vampires and had been for the last forty years. Upon hearing this it didn't take the group long to figure out that the pale man mentioned in the rumors was Voldemort and that whatever the last Horcrux was it was hidden in the cathedral and being guarded by the vampires.

Over the next month the group continued to train and research. They were desperate to find out what the last Horcrux could be. They had managed to track several items which used to belong to Ravenclaw or Gryffindor but when they finally found the most recent trace of them they were either destroyed or lost. After one particularly grueling day they finally found what they were looking for.

"Hey Harry look at this." Said Hermione "This is a dagger which Rowena Ravenclaw owned and used for potion making. "It's last known location was a wizarding museum in Florence and they reported it missing in 1956. This has to be it."

"We've exhausted almost every other possibility so we have nothing to loose but time." Said Harry

"And our lives." Muttered Ron

Harry looked up and Ron and it almost seemed as though his friend was glaring at him it only lasted a second so Harry wrote it off as

stress and an overactive imagination, still the look had been a tad unnerving even if it was a figment.

Harry was snapped out of his revelry by Ron whispering to him. "Reckon we should put the cloaks on here?" He asked referring to the invisibility cloaks they'd brought for this mission.

"Now's a good a time as any." Said Harry "Any ideas how we get down into the catacombs?"

"There should be an entrance beneath the altar." Said Hermione.

"Too bad we couldn't do this on a sunnier day." Said Ron

"I told you Ronald a day like today is better since the vampires will take advantage of the sun being hidden so they can do extra hunting during the day." Said Hermione "If we went during daylight or even night we would find this place crawling with vampires."

"But wouldn't they be asleep during the day?" Asked Ron

"No that's only a myth." Said Hermione

"Shh" Hissed Harry as he used his wand to silently move the altar aside to reveal a staircase leading downward. "This is it guys after this all we need to do is track down Tom and end this war." Said Harry "Once he's dead the Death Eaters will disband just like last time only it won't be as bad since we ended it before recruitment got too high." He said this as cheerfully as possible but both his friends knew the task would be much harder than he made it seem.

They made their way silently through the winding maze of the subterranean labyrinth. Every few yards Hermione would charm a brick so that it glowed for the caster. Using this they kept themselves from walking in circles. Eventually they came to a three way split. They lowered their hoods and looked around.

"What now?" Asked Hermione

"We should split up." Said Ron

"No why don't we just pick a direction and go in it." Said Harry "If we run into trouble we'll be better able to handle it as a group."

Harry thought he saw a flash of anger on Ron's face but it was gone so quickly he overlooked it. "Fine we do it your way but I say we head down the right path."

"Straight ahead would be better." Said Harry

"And I suppose you're the expert since you've been in a death maze before?" Asked Ron sarcastically and with a biting edge.

"What the hell is your problem Ron." Hissed Harry "Vampires have excellent hearing, are you trying to get us killed?"

"Quiet both of you." Whispered Hermione "Let's go straight and see where that tunnel goes."

Ron seemed to shake himself and then looked at his friends apologetically "Sorry guys I don't know what's wrong with me just stress I suppose."

"Let's just keep going." Said Harry. He didn't know what was wrong with Ron but he had a nasty feeling it wasn't stress. He simply hoped he was wrong.

A quarter of an hour and three tunnel intersections later they met their first opposition. They came upon a group of six vampires coming down a side tunnel. They stopped and flattened themselves against the walls hoping the foul creatures would simply pass them by. One of the vampires said something in Italian and the others nodded and started sniffing around. Two of them got dangerously close to Harry and when it seemed one of them was about to discover him he discretely pointed his wand at the vampire and silently cast "Imperio"

Harry instructed the vampire to tell his brethren that he didn't think anything was nearby and that he would stay here and check more thoroughly. One of the other vampires appeared to insist on staying but the others glided down the side tunnels. Short work was made of

the other vampire when two cutting hexes converged on it's neck. The body and detached head turned to dust almost immediately and Harry quickly warned his friends not to kill the remaining vampire.

"Show us where you guard the Dark Lord's treasure." Harry mentally ordered the vampire.

Methodically the vampire lead the group down several side tunnels and past other vampires. There were a few close calls but eventually the group found themselves in a vast room which was similar in size to the Hogwarts Great Hall. On the far side of the room there was a pedestal an ornate silver dagger imbedded in it's top. Harry debated whether or not to try and summon this Horcrux. For one thing the dagger was stuck in the pedestal so it would be difficult to be freed. Another concern was that should the enchantments be anything like the cave which he and Dumbledore visited summoning the dagger would likely notify the vampires. Harry had the vampire step forward and wasn't too surprised to see the damned creature impaled on some spikes that came out of the floor. The vampire remained alive though because the spike had apparently missed his heart. Hermione conjured a boulder and charmed it to roll in front of them. The rock triggered quite a few spells but eventually the group managed to find the winding path to the dagger. Seeing the pedestal closer the group noticed words engraved into the stone.

Hsss sssss sssssss Hssssssss ssshissss.

"That's just gibberish." Whispered Hermione.

Focusing closer on the message Harry read it aloud. "Spill the blood of a virgin and claim thy token."

"In English mate?" Asked Ron

"Hermione needs to drop some blood on the pedestal." Said Harry

"Why me?" Asked Hermione

"I'll tell you if it doesn't work." Said Harry not wanting to get too personal. He was sure she was, but then again you never knew.

Hermione grabbed a knife from a her belt sheath and sliced her palm with it. She squeezed the wound and let her blood flow onto the stool for a moment. The group waited and waited and after about five minutes of nothing happening Hermione whispered to Harry "Well what was that suppose to do?"

"The message said you needed the blood of a vir-," He was saved at the last second by a faint blue glow coming from the dagger. Not wasting anytime he grabbed it and slid it easily out of the pedestal. "Let's go." He ordered.

The group made it out of the chamber but upon retracing their steps they ran into a problem. "Hermione you did keep using the return spell when we were following the vampire weren't you?" Asked Harry

"I was but I can't seem to find the bricks now." She said

"Cast a tracer spell on me and follow me out, I remember the way." Said Ron lowering his hood so Hermione and Harry could cast the spells.

"You're sure you remember how to get out of here Ron?" Asked Hermione

"Stick with me and we'll end up exactly where we need to be." Said Ron confidently.

Ron lead the group along several winding and sloping pathways. After about an Hour Hermione suddenly said. "Ron I just saw one of my charmed bricks. We're going the wrong way."

In response Ron flung off his cloak and shouted "Now!" Before Harry or Hermione could react a dozen vampires appeared in front of them and four Death Eaters came from behind them. "Accio Invisibility Cloaks!" Shouted Ron. Hermione's cloak was snatched away from her but Harry's remained on his back. Ron raised his wand again and pointed it at Hermione. "Give up Potter and I'll make the mudblood's death quick and painless."

Harry was in shock. His mind simply refused to grasp the fact that Ron had a wand pointed at his best friend and was in league with Death Eaters.

“Ron what are you doing!” Yelled Hermione

“Quiet filth!” Yelled Ron shooting a silencing jinx at Hermione who promptly used a shield charm sending it back at Ron. This was all Harry needed to snap him out of his stupor before he started sending curses with everything he had.

“Reducto, Explodra, Concussus, Sectumsimpra!” He fired the blasting and explosion curses at the vampires and the bludgeoning spell at one of the Death Eaters. The slicing spell as Harry liked to call it was sent at Ron.

Ron roared in anger and pain as cuts appeared all over his face, arms and chest. He had been caught off guard since he was dueling Hermione and trying to draw her attention away from the three Death Eaters behind her. Harry was continuing his barrage of spells casting more explosion curses at the Death Eaters who were rapidly shielding themselves and firing curses in his general direction. He occasionally sent a burst of sunlight out of his wand and at a vampire by casting Lumos Solem which burned holes through whatever part of the vampire it hit.

Hermione was livid with her former best friend for betraying them as he was doing. She would have never suspected Ron of doing something like this. Betrayal was for cowards and as far as she had known Ron his only character flaws were his slight jealousy and extreme thickness. Now though he was showing his true colors and Hermione was shocked at the variety of dark hexes and curses he was throwing at her. He had also done some sort of blood rune shield which was stopping all her spells in their tracks.

“Last chance Potter surrender or suffer the consequences.!” Yelled Ron followed by sneering at Hermione “Looks like your friend doesn’t care as much about you as you thought he did, Avada Kadavra!”

Harry saw the flash of green light and turned just in time to see it strike Hermione in the chest. She fell to the ground in a heap and Ron simply laughed. However it wasn't the laugh of Ronald Weasley that Harry heard from his mouth, but a maniacal cackle. Seeing Ron laugh over the dead body of Hermione caused something in Harry to snap. He felt the cold metal of his sword at his side and in one fluid motion the sword of Gryffindor was in his hands and slashing through the four Death Eaters. Taking advantage of being freed from the barrage of sunlight the vampires surged forward only to meet a similar end to their allies. Now it was only Ron and Harry in the tunnel amidst a pile of dust and corpses. "Why?" Asked Harry. The one word echoed through the emptiness of the tunnels and held a tone that was colder than ice.

"Because I was tired of being in your shadow." Said Ron "Always the loyal sidekick, never ask any questions just blindly following the valiant hero on all his glorious adventures. Well no more I serve no one. Not you not the supposed Dark Lord and not a corrupted Ministry full of pompous idiots."

"This was all about envy!" Asked Harry disbelievingly.

"If only it were that simple Potter." Said Ron his voice becoming distorted "Those were thoughts your friend had in his feeble little brain." Ron Smirked "He was always jealous of you not just for your wealth but also because he thought the mudblood liked you better than him. More than once he thought of betraying you but now he has finally put these thoughts into actions. You should have been more careful in the Chamber of Secrets Potter. You should know that I always have a backup plan." Ron laughed again and this time Harry recognized the laugh.

"Riddle." He seethed

Ron's countenance changed instantly gone was the laughter and in its place an expression of the purest rage and loathing. "Do not address me by that filthy name. I am Lord Voldemort! You are a foolish child Potter to try and defy me. However I must commend you for finding three of my Horcruxes so easily. However you failed to not the subtle changes in your friend after his encounter in the chamber.

That snake bit didn't take any of his blood it merely poured my essence into him. Thankfully he had enough negative thoughts and bitterness for me to feed on and manifest myself. Now he is but a tool to be used for you demise, Avada Kadavra!"

The spell was shot straight at Harry even with his invisibility cloak up. He dodged quickly to the side but couldn't mount an offence because more killing curses were being hurled at him. He had no choice but to simply run. The events of the past hour were too much for him to take in all at once and he barely paid attention to his directions. He was vaguely aware of continuing to dodge killing curses and decapitating vampires with his sword. Harry saw a side tunnel and turned into it. The tunnel looked different from the others because it looked even more disused and spider webs hung thickly to the ceiling. Harry could smell water coming from this direction so he figured there may be a way out this way. He didn't have time to survey his surroundings because Ron was gaining on him and was throwing killing curses with gusto. Harry leapt to the side as a Killing curse was coming from his back and crashed painfully against the stone wall. The panel of wall shifted and Harry found himself tumbling down a slick surfaced slope. He landed in the center of what looked like a large runic panel. There were amethysts and sapphires set into a square. Inside the square there were runes which appeared to be made out of melted green and white diamonds. The panel was surrounded by a light blue water. The chamber seemed to radiate with light, but Harry couldn't see the source . The only thing Harry could gather from this room was that it was saturated with an extreme amount of magic.

"No more running Potter." Harry heard the voice of Ron say from the top of the slope. Harry saw that Ron's eyes were no longer the kind blue that they had once been, but now a deep purple with blood red pupils. "Avada Kadavra!" Harry wanted to move to dive to the side and into the water. However his feet seemed to be stuck on the panel which was now glowing brightly. As the green light drew closer and closer everything started to blur and the world seemed to spin in every direction at once. Colors were running together until everything was engulfed in a white light. Harry was vaguely aware of a burning in his right hand which still held his wand and another different tingling sensation everywhere else along his body. Just as quickly as

it started it stopped and when the world came back into focus Harry knew that something was very wrong.

“Since when were there two bloody suns!”

Brave New World

Harry Potter was certain he was now insane. He knew magic could do almost anything but even magic had its limits. It couldn't bring back the dead and it couldn't make the world have two suns. He checked the horizon again to make sure he wasn't just seeing things. Sure enough there were two burning balls of fire in the sky. One looked as if it was setting while the other looked like it was just rising. Upon surveying his surroundings more closely he noticed he was in the middle of nowhere. All he could see in any direction was sand and sky. Another thing he noticed was that he was no longer holding his wand. His hand was burning where he'd been holding it and upon inspecting his hand he gasped when he realized he couldn't see it. Then he remembered that he had his cloak on but he didn't feel its familiar wait around his shoulders. Now he was starting to panic. One could only take so much at one time and Harry was about at the breaking point. He took a few deep breaths trying to collect himself. There had to be a logical explanation for this, at least that was what Hermione would say. Thoughts of Hermione brought back quite a few unpleasant memories of the recent past.

"Hermione's....dead." Whispered Harry not quite believing it. He decided to leave those thoughts alone until he figured out his immediate situation. He had no invisibility cloak yet he couldn't see himself. He looked at his left hand and sure enough he couldn't see it. Although he realized he was still holding his sword in his left hand it was just invisible like the rest of him. He tried to focus on a way to be visible again and suddenly he felt a tingling sensation all around him and he finally saw his hands again. Looking himself over he saw that he was no worse for wear.

He inspected his right hand once again looking for what could be causing the burning and gasped when he saw a burn the shape of a phoenix feather running across his palm. The burn had a slight glow to it and Harry could sense the magic coming from it. Feeling inspired he lifted his hand and pointed his palm toward what he supposed was east. "Reducto!" He hadn't known what to expect when he did this, but it was not to be launched through the air by the backlash of a huge shockwave of magic. His hand was throbbing and he was spinning end over end at a startling speed. This lasted for about ten

minutes until he finally landed on his back and upturned a generous amount of sand. Unfortunately for Harry disturbance in the sand attracted some very unwanted attention.

The ground started vibrating and the sand seemed to shift as if something was tunneling through it. Harry quickly leapt backwards off the ground ignoring his body's protests at the sudden movement. A giant serpentine creature reared out of the sand and glowered down at Harry. The creature was at least a hundred feet long and was a bluish grey color with red around where it's giant hole of a mouth was. The mouth had teeth all along it's perimeter and thick saliva was dripping from the huge maw. Not knowing what else to do Harry raised his hand and shouted "Incendio!" The results were on par with the Reducto Curse. A huge swath of fire came from Harry's hand and engulfed the giant worm in a sizzling inferno. The worm unleashed a horrible shriek as the flames roasted it within it's armor like exoskeleton. The beast landed with a resounding thud and showered Harry in a huge wave of sand. He instinctively reached up to stay his glasses and for the first time realized he didn't have them, but unlike the other times when he'd lost his glasses his vision was not blurry. In fact he could see just as well if not better then he used to be with his glasses. He added this to the ever growing list of oddities to think about when he was somewhere safer.

He gathered himself up and started walking in a random direction. He hoped he wouldn't run into anymore trouble because his right hand was now throbbing from the Reducto curse and burning terribly from the Incendio Hex. As he walked the sun he thought was setting started to get higher while the other one eventually disappeared below the horizon. Aside from the fact that it was now traveling backwards it was a relief to see only one sun in the sky. And so he walked. On and on not knowing where he was going and hoping for the best. Occasionally he ran into some odd lizard creatures who behaved more like wolves. Three or four of them would circle him and try to bring him down like some sort of prey. It was during the first of these times where something interesting happened. A lizard leapt at him from behind and was immediately eviscerated by the Sword of Gryffindor. It had only been one flick of the wrist and it had seemed oddly natural to kill the creature almost instinctual. The other lizards soon suffered the fate of their comrades. This continued for some

time until Harry could barely stand upright. He figured if he just rested his eyes a minute he'd be able to keep going.

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Bikinel Island was hot this time of year. In fact it was hot all times of the year since the middle of it was a huge scorching desert. The coast of the island was littered with fresh water springs and had an abundance of plant life. The coast of the island was also home to a very prosperous village which was usually home to treasure hunters seeking the wealth which was buried in the desert. Many had been extremely lucky with what they'd found in the desert. There had been some rare weapons and even rarer Materia in hidden within the sand. There had also been some very powerful fiends found as well. This was why it was against national law to venture into the desert alone. Each group which entered the desert was required to have at least four people and at least one of them was required to know black and/or white magic. The Spiran government had been getting pressured by the other nations to take action about the number of fatalities in the desert a few centuries ago when the treasure hunting craze was at its peak. This is what found two particular young people looking for two more members to accompany them into the desert so they could try and find some useful items for their trade.

"Why can't we just go in by ourselves?" Asked a brown haired girl. She was Sophia Terone a member of the 'world renowned' Chaos Flame. A group of freelance mercenaries

"We could." Said her partner, a tall young man of around eighteen with deeply tanned skin and platinum hair, Bastian Dream was his name. He was the leader of the group. They were willing to do almost anything for the right amount of gill. They'd do anything from yard work to bounty hunting. Right now the group was small but they already had a name for themselves. Bastian had been a top student of Bessaid Garden and was on his way to the top ranks of SeeD, a worldwide group of peacekeepers who basically acted as a sort of global police force. They weren't loyal to any country and would only aid in situations that affected their interests. What interests those were was unknown to Bastian because he'd been kicked out of SeeD for 'unlawful activities'. Really it was all a misunderstanding. He'd

been at the wrong place at the wrong time and took the fall for the real culprit. "However if we did do that we'd be breaking an international treaty law which would be very bad if one of us was to get hurt while we were out there."

"So we just walk up to some random person and ask them to take us into the desert?" Asked Sophia incredulously

"Basically yeah that's what we do." Answered Bastian. Seeing her scowl he decided to elaborate "We hire a drill rig and that should get us out there with enough people to excavate a good amount of sand away."

"To do that we need gil and right now we have next to none." She informed him "It'll be too hard to go back to headquarters to get some from the vault and when spent what we had trying to get the-,"

She was cut off by Bastian hissing "Quiet, do you want to get us caught?" He asked "You can't just bring that up anywhere even though we failed to get it we were still sighted so they'll be looking for us. Why do you think We're out here trying to dig for them?"

"Sorry." She answered weakly with a sheepish smile. "Anyway what are we going to do about money?"

"I've got it." He said simply "Oh and Sophia give me your hand."

"What?" She asked

"Just give me your hand." He said taking it. He concentrated and light came from his hand and snaked it's way through her body settling into her head. She looked shocked and he simply grinned at her.

"You didn't?" She asked

"I did." He said "I've got one too."

"How?" She asked

“Remember those guys in Guodosalam that looked familiar?” He asked. She nodded and he continued “That’s because they were some of our old friends out on a mission. I figured a good way to pay them back was to get them in some serious shit with the DC.”

“And you managed to get two from them? I don’t even want to know how you did it, you didn’t kill them did you?” She asked

“As tempting as that would have been no I didn’t.” He answered “You’re not complaining are you, I mean now we can use magic and even draw some spells if the need arises. Materia would have been to conspicuous and neither of us are really adapt in it either.”

“I didn’t need one to do magic but it certainly helps.” She said

“Cure, Fire and Blizzard don’t count as magic.” He said teasing her.

“It’s more then you can do.” She shot back “The only spell you know without junctions is Slow which is useless on half the people we and fiends we come across.”

“We’re getting off topic here.” Said Bastian “We need to find someone willing to go out into the desert for cheep.”

“Look at that sign.” She said pointing to a sign on one of the many excavation agencies. It read Sand Scavengers: Rent a drill only 300 gill per day plus first pick of 10 of the haul. “that doesn’t sound too bad.”

“As long as we don’t find anything they’re interested in.” Said Bastian “And if we do they’ll probably take and try to sell it back to us.”

They walked into the agency and saw a girl with black hair wearing what was presumably the company uniform, sand colored overalls with an emblem of a scorpion over the heart. “What do you want?” She asked in a monotone without looking up.

“We want to hire a drill.” Said Bastian

The girl groaned. "Are you sure you want one of our drills they're terribly unreliable and no one ever finds anything with our people."

Bastian and Sophia looked shocked for a moment. Weren't businesses suppose to try and lure you in and not turn you out with discouragement? "Uhh." Was all Bastian managed before a shout came from the back of the building.

"Damnit are you trying to run customers away again!" Yelled a man's voice. "Just because you don't like the desert does not mean you can slack off. The next client is still yours and I expect you to come back with a good commission this time!"

"Damnit old man keep your nose out of my business!" Yelled the girl "The minute I get a better gig then this I am out of here."

"Tend to the customers you ungrateful brat!" Yelled the man again this time coming toward the front. He was a very tall man almost seven feet with golden-red shoulder length hair which was going grey in places along his beard and mustache. "Forgive the girl folks she's here because her mother insisted she work with me this year some crap about parental bonding. Load of shit if you ask me."

"Got that right." Said the girl

"Shame though she does have a knack for finding things. Girl just hates the desert." Said the man. "Names Genson by the way. You two looking for some kind of treasure I take it?"

"Something like that." Said Bastian "Names Bastian and this is Sophia we'll take a week package with agreement to help with the actual work."

"Hmm" Said Genson "Most folks want us to do all the work while they sit and watch glad to see some people who aren't afraid to get their hands dirty. Unlike some people." The last part he threw at his daughter.

"What is there to like about the desert anyway father. All it has is sand, sand, heat and oh yes did I forget sand?"

“Quiet Sheyna.” Said Genson “You’re going out there with them on the rig so I wouldn’t complain or I might give them an extra week free of charge just so you stay out there longer.”

“You wouldn’t!” She shouted

“Shouldn’t you stop them so we can get going?” Asked Sophia

“If we get an extra week for free I am not complaining.” Said Bastian
“I told the others they had two months to get back to headquarters so we still have six weeks to get this done.”

“Two weeks it is then.” Said Genson “That’ll be 3,000 gil up front.” He pulled a contract out of the drawer “This is just a formality should things go awry or you try to withhold our commission.”

Bastian read the contract thoroughly and everything seemed to be in order. He signed it and handed over a stack of notes for the rental of the drill. “Which one of you is the white mage of your little party?” Asked Genson

“We both stock white magic.” Said Bastian

“Stock? You’re SeeD?” Asked Sheyna

“Not exactly.” Said Bastian “However we have means of doing what they do.”

“You’ll need to stop and draw magic then or are you all stocked up?” Asked Genson

“We’ve got plenty of healing magic in stock, but we could use some offensive magic if you know where to find some.” Said Sophia

“Take ‘em to fight some sand lizards Sheyna.” Said Genson. “If that’s all you need then be back here in three hours and be ready to go.” With that he returned to the back of the building.

“See you guys in a while I guess.” Said Sheyna

As the duo exited the shop they heard a loud boom from a distance away. Following the sound they came upon a collapse group of trees that looked as though they'd been blasted apart by some tremendous force. Not knowing what else to do they decided to stock some last minute supplies from an item shop.

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When they returned to Sand Scavengers they found Sheyna with two bangles on each wrist with different colored stones in slots along each wrist. Most of them were green and blue but there were a few yellows and purples and even one red one. She also had a short riffle holstered at her left hip and a katana sheathed behind her back.

"Let's get this show on the road." She said with false enthusiasm.

They made their way to the back of the building and into the garage area for the mobile sand rigs. Once they were on board they were lead to their respective rooms and told where to find Sheyna should they need anything while traveling. The rig had three levels. Engine and Cargo level. Main level which was where the entrance ramp to the rig, the infirmary and mess area were located and finally the Residential level which consisted of about twenty single person rooms. Sixteen of said rooms were occupied on this trip by the rig operators and crew members to assist with the actual excavation.

Once they were settled in they headed for the bridge which was located on the Main level. Sheyna was in what appeared to be the Captain's chair because it was elevated higher then the others and had the best view out of the large window.

"Hover modules?" Asked Sheyna

"Check" Said one of the crewmen

"Fuel guards?" She asked again

"Fuel guards secure" affirmed another crew member, this time a woman.

"Let's head out people!" She called. The rig lurched once before starting forward. "We'll be anchoring in about ten minutes you should head down to the chocobo stables in the engine level."

"Chocobos?" Asked Bastian a little hesitantly

"What's wrong afraid of harmless birds?" Asked Sheyna with a smirk.

Sofia tried to suppress her giggles at the look on Bastian's face. "Harmless!" He said incredulously. He stuck out his right arm and pointed to an old scar below his elbow. "That was from when I was twelve and all I did was try to pet the damn thing." He tapped a spot on his shoulder and said. "That happened three years ago when I was minding my own business by a stable in Limblum. I also have a scar on my back from where one of them kicked me when I was ten."

"And every single time you did something to deserve it." Said Sophia "When you were by the stable you called it an overgrown pigeon. When you were twelve you thought it would be funny to feed them Waskil Greens when you knew the chocobo didn't like spicy stuff. And when you were ten I have it on good authority that you let a juvenile chocobo eater into the stable and made the chocobos run around causing you to be run over."

"Traitor." He muttered

Sheyna and the crew members who had been listening laughed openly at the shameful look on Bastian's face "Don't try to kill any of our birds and you should be fine."

"Whatever." He muttered walking out of the bridge and heading to the stables. He was followed by Sophia and Sheyna and they quickly saddled three chocobos and waited for the all clear to head out.

"So let me get this straight." Asked Sophia suddenly "We ride out and look for a suitable place to start digging and kill any fiends along the way?"

“Not quite.” Said Sheyna “There are a few fiends that we are not to engage under any circumstances. Giant Zuu and Sand Worm’s are off limits. Werevultures, Sand Lizards, Coral Asps and Armadado are all clear though.”

“What do we do if we see any of the first two?” Asked Bastian

“You should see the Zuu from a mile a way and your chocobo should be able to outrun them. There are guns on the rig to handle them. What you should worry about are the sandworms. You can’t see them until they breach the surface and when their under the sand chocobos have a hard time outrunning them. If the ground starts trembling start heading back to the rig.”

“Gotcha” Said Bastian. He and Sophia remembered the monsters from SeeD training and knew they were a force to be reckoned with. It took a good deal of strong magic to bring down either one of those creatures and they weren’t something you’d want to run into. The all clear was given shortly afterward and the group steered their steeds north from the rig.

They were riding for about twenty minutes when Sheyna signaled them to stop. “Hold it.” She said

“What’s up?” Asked Sophia

“Something’s sticking out of the sand up ahead.” They slowly made their way closer and they found a dead sandworm halfway buried in the sand. “Uh-oh.” Groaned Sheyna “This thing looks like it’s been cooked alive.” She stated “Someone must of used a powerful Flare spell on it and even one of those would have to be really powerful. It must have been a group of people.”

“Why is this bad?” Asked Bastian “Better a dead one than a live one right?”

“You’d think so wouldn’t you?” She asked rhetorically “Unfortunately Sand Worms heave a very close knit subterranean society. When one of them gets killed like this it sends the others into an uproar.

That's one of the main reasons why we don't like to engage them. With Sandworm activity on the rise digging is a lot more...eventful."

"That sounds encouraging." Said Bastian sarcastically.

As they continued along their path they came across some half buried sand lizards. They appeared to have been cut open rather violently.

"I'd say they were hunters who did this but they haven't taken anything. There just dead." Said Sheyna

They continued on and they eventually came upon an arm sticking out of the ground. They dismounted and made their way over to the appendage. Bastian grabbed the arm and pulled. A battered man with a sword gripped tightly in his left hand was pulled from beneath the sand.

"Is he dead?" Asked Sophia

"Still has a pulse." Said Sheyna "His breathings really shallow and by the looks of it he's got a few broken bones. Let's put him over my Chocobo and head back to the rig. We can't dig around here because the Sand warms will be too violent."

They loaded the man onto the chocobo and headed back toward the rig.

...

Pain. This was what Harry felt in his whole body. He'd been sleeping for Merlin knew how long face down in the sand. Then he vaguely remembered hearing people talking and then being moved. He recalled being bent over something and crying out in pain as his back was bent over something. Then something had made him sleep again and when he was next aware he was lying on something soft. He heard voices but hardly anything they said made sense to him.

"...cast Regen on him , but it's barely working too many broken bones."

“Set the ones you can then an Elixir should ...”

He'd blocked out after that and when he was aware again he heard more talking.

“...sword would go good in my collection.”

“You can't take it it's his!”

“Probably stole it.”

“You don't know that.”

“Is he awake yet?”

“Nope he's still asleep Sheyna.”

“Well his sword had lizard blood all over it so I'm guessing he was one of the ones who killed those Sand Lizards and the worm.”

“When he's awake we can ask him.”

Now all he felt was agony. His right arm felt like it had been shattered and he was aching all over and he couldn't figure out why. The last thing he remembered was slashing a lizard in half. The events of the day came flooding back to him and he groaned aloud. He was really hoping that when he opened his eyes he'd see the Hogwarts' Hospital Wing. Hope as he might something told him that he was not there. He slowly opened his eyes and saw...a ceiling. Nothing special about it just an off white color and smooth-looking. He tried to move his head to look around but found he was unable to. Suddenly his vision was interrupted by someone's head. They had blonde hair and hazel eyes. He assumed it was a woman by the way her face looked.

“You're awake!” She said excitedly. “How do you feel?”

He tried to respond “Like I've been run over by a herd of hippogriff.” However he couldn't seem to move his mouth.

“Oh silly me your partially petrified.” She moved out of his field of vision and he vaguely felt something being injected into his left arm. A cold sensation seemed to flow through his vanes and run through his entire body. Once it was over the cold feeling was replaced by more pain. Harry was no stranger to pain thanks to his relatives and constant exposure to the Cruciatus Curse. However, this did not stop him from screaming in agony from the intense agony running through his entire body.

“I take it you feel a great deal of pain.” Said the woman knowingly.

“Just a bit.” Harry wheezed out.

“Well this should take care of that.” She placed a hand on his chest and a pale green light engulfed his body. He felt warm and comforted by the light and he could feel his injuries healing. He was still in pain but it was reduced considerably. “That’s the strongest cure spell I know. You’ll still need to rest for about a week and even after that you’re going to need to take it easy. We’ve already given you quite a few Elixirs and we even had to use a Phoenix Down twice.” She smiled reassuringly at him. “If you survived whatever it is that did this to you the Captain’s interrogation should be no problem for you.”

“What?” He asked confused.

“Don’t worry about it right now.” Said the woman “Just Sleep!” A white light came from her hands and the next thing Harry knew he was soundly asleep.

...

Sheyna was not in a good mood. Of all the crews to find a wounded criminal why did it have to be hers. The boy they found in the desert was obviously at least partly responsible for killing the Sand Lizards. This wasn’t the problem though, he was found alone and not far from a dead Sand Worm. It was highly likely he was with a group of poachers who hunted the worms for their bodily fluids which worked well in explosive making. This theory also had its flaws though because the worm had been burned rather badly and it appeared that some of its fluids had ignited causing small explosions inside the

carapace. Poachers would not have wanted the fluid to be damaged. They usually used strong gravity magic to crush the worms. All in all, the stranger was an enigma she was determined to solve.

The door to her quarters opened and Bastian walked in. "Should we go check on Sleeping Beauty?" He asked

"If you think he's awake then sure." She responded

They made their way down to the infirmary just in time to hear Sophia and Claire, the medic for the crew, talking to the stranger.

"So how long have I been out?" He asked in an odd accent.

"We found you in the desert four days ago." Said Claire "You were out when the captain brought you on board and you slept until this morning when you woke up for a few minutes."

"How did you make me go back to sleep earlier?"

"Sleep spell." Said the medic

"Which one?" He asked

"What do you mean?" Asked Claire

"I mean what was the incantation?" He clarified

"Umm...Sleep?" Said Sophia

"That's not an incantation."

"Well I used a sleep spell I had stocked and it knocked you right out." Said Claire "I don't know what you mean by incantation but that's all I did."

"What did you do to heal me then?" He asked

"A few Elixirs, A phoenix Down when they brought you in and one later when you were slipping again. We cast Regen a few times to

speed the healing of your bones and Sophia here used Curaga on that arm of yours. What did you do to yourself anyway?"

"That's what I'd like to know." Said Sheyna speaking for the first time. All the heads in the room turned to face her one with very slow and painful movements. "We found you after seeing a dead Sand Worm and several disemboweled lizards. Care to explain?"

"I don't know how I got in the desert." He began slowly "I was in a cave being chased by someone who was throwing Killing Curses at me then the next thing I know I'm in a desert." He took a deep breath "My wand is gone, my skin seems to have fused with my cloak and the next thing I know a huge worm is trying to eat me. I did the first thing that came to mind and shot an Incendio Hex at it. Problem is I usually use a wand to do that and it seems my magic decided to backfire and break every bone in my right arm."

"You killed the Sandworm by yourself?" Asked Sheyna slowly "That's impossible!"

"Why do you keep talking about wands, incantations and hexes?" Asked Bastian "It all sounds a little weird to me."

"Here's a better question." Said the stranger "Why were there two suns out there?"

Everyone in the room looked at each other for a minute and silence reigned throughout the infirmary. Finally Claire broke the silence "Are you saying that where you come from there aren't two suns?"

"So that's normal for you people?" He asked "And I suppose it going the opposite way in the sky is too?"

There was more silence and finally Sheyna spoke "Listen...Wait what's your name?"

"Harry." He responded

“Listen Harry we’ll answer your questions we just need to discuss some things a bit.” She moved out of the door and ushered the others to follow her. Things just got a lot more complicated.

...

“You don’t really think it could be true do you?” Asked Bastian “I mean the last time this happened was over a thousand years ago, or so they say.”

“That’s what we learned in SeeD anyway.” Said Sophia ignoring the glower from Bastian at the mention of their former occupation.

“I thought you said you weren’t SeeD.” Said Sheyna

“We’re not.” Said Bastian “It’s complicated.”

“I’ll bet.” Said Sheyna “To answer y our question though I think he is an offworlder. It make sense. Anyone native here would know that there’s been two suns for the last ten thousand years.”

“You think this means another merger then?” Asked Sophia

“The last time that happened it started a huge war and the conflicts still aren’t resolved yet.” Said Bastian. “I really hope that this is an isolated incident.

“So what do we tell him then?” Asked Sheyna

“Let’s try not to give him too much info at one time.” Said Sophia “He’s obviously been through a lot recently and we shouldn’t shake him up.”

“He could just be delusional.” Said Claire “He was in the desert for a long time.”

“I don’t think he’s imagining things.” Said Bastian “I say we tell him what he needs to know.”

“And that is...?” Asked Sheyna

“Everything.” Said Bastian

Woes of the Wounded Wizard

Harry waited for the people to return to the room. He wondered what they needed to discuss that would cause them to leave the room. He'd only asked about the suns. Apparently there was some significance to that question. He took the opportunity to survey his new surroundings. The walls seemed to be made of metal and the window appeared to be high above the sand. There were several beds in the room each with curtains which could be drawn around it. There was an office in one corner which appeared to be the medic's quarters. There was a door in the middle of the wall he was facing which his visitors had exited through and there was another door further down the wall which had to be a loo.

"Nope not the hospital wing." He said to himself. With the lack of things to look at his thoughts drifted back to what he now knew had been five days before. Somehow Voldemort had possessed Ron through the snake in the Chamber of Secrets. He'd gone on to kill Hermione and he nearly killed Harry if whatever happened to him hadn't happened. Or maybe that was what happened. The Killing Curse had hit him and he was in Hell with Satan using insanity as a means of torture. He realized quickly that he wasn't dead. He was still breathing and he just didn't feel dead. Thinking about death lead to another startling thought. Where were the dagger and his other trunk which had the other Horcruxes?

His thoughts were interrupted by the door reopening and his rescuers returning. There was the guy with hair like Malfoy and eyes which were a weird purple color. The blond haired woman with the hazel eyes, the brown haired girl with blue eyes and the black haired girl with honey colored eyes. He really needed to find out names for these people.

"So what are you alls names?" He asked

"I'm Bastian Dream." Said the tanned man.

"Sophia." Said the brown haired girl.

"Claire." Said the medic

“Sheyna.” Said the black haired girl.

“So are you going to tell me what’s going on then?” Asked Harry

“We can only speculate and it’s a rather detailed explanation.” Said Claire “I believe you know it best Bastian?”

“This all started millennia ago, or so I’m told.” He began “The stories say that there was one world that was rich in magic. There were beings on this world called sorceresses and one of them got the bright idea of trying to compress time. The people of that era couldn’t do anything because she was reaching back to the past to cause damage. The people in the past decided to help her on her way to time compression and thereby send a team from a group known as SeeD to what they considered the future in order to destroy her. In the end she was destroyed, but the damage had been done. The common theory is that the distortion of time caused some sort of dimensional imbalance and ruptured the gateway between realms. This is because over the next two thousand years the world started to change. Creatures which people had never seen before started to show up and the face of the planet started to change. Whole cities appeared out of nowhere and oceans shifted and mountain ranges moved. It was a huge mess. Eventually things settled down and there were about three new continents and about three times as many people. SeeD was still around and it had evolved a great deal since its beginnings. They were able to organize peace treaties between all the new nations and prevent a mass war. Things were relatively fine for a while after that until about ten thousand years ago. Are you still with me?”

“Yeah...” Said Harry “I’m just not sure I see where this is going.”

“It will make sense when he’s done.” Sophia assured him.

“If you say so.” Said Harry skeptically.

“Right so ten thousand years ago.” Continued Bastian “Weird things started happening again. First a second sun appeared in the sky and three more moons showed up as well. This wasn’t so bad really the

days were longer and people got more done. The problem started when the Empire of Baron showed up. They were a very technologically advanced people they rivaled Eshar and New Zanerkand in power. SeeD tried to negotiate with them but the Empire wouldn't settle for equality. They attacked the International Confederation and sent the world into war. The war lasted about two centuries. By the time it was over the overall population was cut in half. The Empire lost all its resources trying to win a multi front war. However this didn't mean that the ICN was unscathed. Apparently the nations hadn't been forthcoming with information to each other regarding their weaponry."

"The members of the ICN didn't trust each other anymore and no one thought they were being treated fairly in the recovery effort. The ICN eventually broke apart and SeeD stopped interfering directly with national governments. They turned back to their roots and their main objective. After the ICN crumbled new nations were founded, civil wars were fought, some were won most were lost, and the people tried to live. About a thousand years ago there was a man who appeared in Lucca, that's a city in the middle of Spira, He had strange powers and he claimed to not know a thing about this world. Most people thought he was an arbiter of doom because of the last offworld invasion. However the man simply wanted to find a way back to his own home. As far as I know he never found it."

"That's a nice story but what does it have to do with me?" Asked Harry

"You would be another offworlder." Said Sophia "If people found out they'd panic. There are still some splinter factions from the Baron Empire that are maneuvering to restart a war. If people found out that another merger was going to happen they'd try to capture you and pump you for every bit of information they can about your world and possible conflicts that could arise."

"And you're not going to turn me in?" He asked

"That depends." Said Bastian "Does your world have possible harm for the rest of us?"

Harry thought about that for a moment and his mind immediately went to Voldemort. He wondered how to answer that question. If he said yes would they turn him over to some sort of government officials or would they possibly help him get back to his world and stop the possible threat to theirs? He decided to gamble. "I'd be lying if I said there was nothing that could threaten this world. Before I came here my world was in the middle of a growing war."

The faces around the room looked grave at this news and Harry felt his heart sink. "I suppose this means you're turning me over then?" He asked

"What exactly is your war about?" Asked Bastian

"In a nut shell there is this bigoted Dark Lord with a lot of power who thinks that Wizards with pure blood are better than non wizards or wizards with mixed blood. Twenty years ago he was at the height of his reign until a prophecy was made about the person who would defeat him. He tried to defy fate and ended up playing right into its hands. This cost him thirteen years without a body until three years ago he managed to use some necromancy ritual to make a new one and restart his rain of terror."

"That doesn't sound as bad as it could be." Said Claire

"I forgot to mention the non magical world and its ongoing wars and quests to outdo the other nations in military superiority. Oh and I'm the only one who can defeat the Dark Lord I mentioned earlier."

"What do you mean you're the only one?" Asked Bastian

"Remember that prophecy?" Asked Harry. They nodded and he continued. "It says that I'm the only one who can defeat him. It's magically binding so there's not much leeway in things like that."

"And now you're stuck in a totally different realm." Said Sheyna cheerfully "You just have all the luck huh?"

"You don't know the half of it." Said Harry collapsing back onto his bed.

"We'll let you sleep Harry we've got about two weeks before we need to figure out what to do about this." Said Sheyna "Just rest up for now and when you feel up to it we'll show you around a bit."

"A couple questions first?" He asked

"What is it?" Asked Sheyna

"Where are my sword and trunk?"

"We found the sword but I don't remember seeing any trunk." Said Bastian.

"It was in my robe pocket." Said Harry. During the course of his treatment his clothes had been removed and replaced with hospital pajamas.

Claire went into a cabinet and ruffled through some clothes. All I see is a Dagger and a box of cards." She said.

"Can you bring me both of them please?" He asked. She brought over the dagger and placed it on his bedside table and handed him the box. He sat the box on the floor and tapped it with his right hand. His trunk returned to its normal size and looked to be in one piece. Using that little bit of magic exhausted him and he promptly went back to sleep.

...

It had been two days since Harry had awakened and the group was going to start its first dig. Once again Sheyna, Sophia and Bastian were riding chocobos in search of a suitable excavation site. They had been riding for about twenty minutes when Sheyna stopped them and dismounted. She pulled out an odd looking device and handed one to the other two prospectors.

"These are Seismic Scopes." She explained "They're outfitted with a Quake Materia which has been altered to use subtle seismic waves to see if anything's buried."

They split up and almost immediately their devices began to react. It seemed no matter where they moved there was something buried there.

"This is either a graveyard or the mother load of hauls" Said Sheyna wistfully.

"I thought you hated this stuff." Said Bastian

"I dislike being in the desert, but I'm only half acting with my dad back in the city." Said Sheyna. "This could be just what I need to get out of here too."

They wasted no time in marking the site and heading back to the rig. Sheyna quickly ordered the rig to move out once they were all onboard. Ten minutes later the rig was in position and Sheyna began calling out orders.

"Henson you're leading the scourers out of the hanger. Bennot I want the air shovels working at maximum, we've got at least a half mile of sand to break through before we hit anything. Dryan lay anchor here and shut off the turbines. Let's go people!"

...

Harry was awakened by a loud rumbling sound. He rubbed his eyes and looked around seeing if anyone was nearby. Seeing no one he decided to try and stand up. He moved his legs over the edge of the bed and tried to stand. He instantly regretted it as pain shot up his legs and through his back. He collapsed back on the bed panting.

"Didn't I say it would be at least a week before you walk?" Asked Claire "Do you not understand the meaning of the word rest?"

"You know you aren't the first healer to ask me that." Said Harry "I just hate infirmaries in general."

“Well if you’ve had anything close to what happened to you this time happen before I would very much like to meet whoever had to put up with you.” Said Claire

“I think you’d like her.” Said Harry “You’re both intolerant when it comes to letting your patients out of their beds. What was that noise by the way?”

“Their starting a dig and you heard the air shovels starting as well as the scourers leaving from the hanger.”

“Scourers?” He asked confused

“They hover off the ground and are used to make trenches in the sand to displace it. They’re used in large scale digs. The captain must think this is a big haul.”

“That’s good then right?” Asked Harry. He’d been told about the rig he was currently on board and that their job was to uncover buried treasure that the Sanabia Desert was reputed for.

“That’s very good.” Said Claire “The bigger the haul the larger the commission and the larger the commission the more time we get off after this job.”

“Any idea what their going to do with me yet?” Asked Harry

“We still haven’t decided.” Said Claire “We know that it would be hell for you if we turn you over, but in the interest of protecting the people of this world we really should.”

“I can appreciate your position.” Said Harry “I don’t like it, but whatever you decide to do I’ll go with it for now. I don’t have much of a choice and I still don’t have any idea how to handle this situation.”

“Something will work itself out.” She assured him patting his shoulder gently. She made her way back into her quarters leaving Harry to his thoughts.

He hated these moments. When he was left alone with no one to distract his thoughts always drifted back to his home. He'd basically damned his own people. By allowing Ron to get possessed he'd let his best friend get killed and now he was gone from his world leaving know one to stop Voldemort. He knew he needed to get back but he had no idea how he'd gotten here let alone how to get back. He figured it must have had something to do with the weird panel he'd found in the catacombs.

He wondered what 'Ron' would tell everyone. Knowing Tom Riddle he was likely to twist this to his advantage. One thing that kept bothering Harry though was Tom's speech about bowing to no master not even a Dark Lord. If this was true then who was pulling his strings. Harry was sure that Voldemort was the one possessing Ron, so why would he count himself as a threat. Harry just added it to the large list of questions which he had no answer to. He looked over at the dagger on the table and studied it closely. Something immediately caught his attention about the weapon. The blade had a large crack running from hilt to tip. He picked it up and was surprised to feel no magic from the weapon. When he'd pulled it out of the pedestal it had been wreaking with dark magic. Now though it was just an ordinary dagger. He sat up and opened his trunk He pulled out the cup and it too was cracked. He moved to the locket and found that it was split completely in half. None of the items held magic anymore. "Well" Thought Harry "At least I don't have to worry about the Horcruxes."

...

It took about a week and a half to clear away enough sand to see what was buried. It turned out to be some sort of ancient ruin. Sheyna decided that it was safe to explore the ruin on foot even though only the top layer was uncovered. Today found them geared up in helmets, weapons and small explosives ready to tackle the ruins.

"We'll enter here and work our way down." She said

"Won't there be sand inside?" Asked Sophia

"Probably." Said Sheyna "But there are bound to be empty rooms and possibly fiends or hidden loot."

"What do we do if we run out of time while we're doing this?" Asked Bastian "We only have about three days left on the contract."

"If you read the contract closely you know that you signed on for the completion of the mission. The two weeks was the time you had to look for something. Once excavation starts you're on our time."

"But this could take months!" Said Bastian

"It could." Said Sheyna "In a hurry?"

"We need to be somewhere in about a month." Said Sophia

"We'd better get a move on then." Said Sheyna

They walked into the ruins and found themselves in a square room. There was nothing in it except some steps leading down. The lights on their helmets automatically came on when they started down the stairs. The room below was much larger and it seemed to have some interesting items as well.

"Look at all these weapons." Said Bastian looking at the numerous swords, shields and axes strapped to the wall. Some of them were very primitive while others looked to be made by micro smiths, blacksmiths who forge blades so precise they could theoretically cut subatomic particles.

"Remember we're just looking at the moment." Said Sheyna "You never know what protects places like this. If you pick one of those up you could trigger a trap and have us up to our necks in fiends."

They made their way through the room memorizing what was worthy of note to take a closer look at later. They made their way down to the next floor and found a grand chamber with a huge sarcophagus in the center. Along the walls were suits of armor each separated by a torch. As soon as they stepped into the room they realized they'd made a mistake. The wall behind them shut and the torches on the walls ignited on their own. The suits of armor suddenly took on a life of their own and about twenty suits headed toward the group.

“Either of you have Protect?” Asked Sheyna “Because we’re gong to need it.” She withdrew her gun from her holster and started firing at the arms of the suits hoping to disarm them. This only seemed to make the armors move faster. Sophia quickly cast Protect on the group and followed up with casting Haste on Bastian. He nodded his thanks and unsheathed his Claymore. He charged the armor slicing indiscriminately. Sophia cast a few Thundara spells and the lightning attack made short work of the possessed armor. Once the suits were gone the group quickly healed themselves and took a breather.

“What now?” Asked Sophia “The door won’t open.”

“We find another way.” Said Sheyna

...

It had been a long week for Harry Potter. True to his nature every day he had tried to get back on his feet and every time he’d been forced back into bed. The only time he was aloud up was for necessity and then Claire would just stand there and watch him.

“You’re going to have to get over your shame and do what you need to do.” She had said “I am not standing here all day.”

Eventually she conceded to turning around but it was still quite embarrassing for Harry. Yesterday he’d finally managed a few steps and his legs were just a little stiff. The soreness in his back had gone away. His right arm had stopped hurting some time ago and it seemed to be fully functional again. Even though his hand was now more or less in one piece he still didn’t plan on doing any magic with it anytime soon. He wondered what other kinds of magic would do here. He hadn’t tried to appearate and he was very leery of doing so. If a simple Incendio shattered most of his arm appearating might kill him.

He musings were interrupted by Claire coming into the room. “Today’s the day we finish your healing.” She informed him with her usual cheeriness. “We could’ve completely healed you with magic but then you could have rejected so much magic and ended up worse.”

“So I’ll be able to move around again like I could before?” He asked hopefully

“More or less.” She said “I still want you to take it easy, and absolutely no doing whatever it is you did before to shatter your arm.”

“Yes ma’am.” Said Harry

Clair stuck out her hand and a pale green glow surrounded Harry. His few remaining wounds healed instantly and the pain in his legs and back went completely away. He stood up and stretched working out the stiffness in his muscles from a week of disuse.

“What do I do now?” He asked

“You can head to the mess area or look around the rig. There’s a room for you on the top floor, number 17 is yours. The other crew members don’t know about the offworlder business and you should keep it that way.”

He wasted no time in leaving the infirmary. He was extremely curious as to what the rest of the place looked like. The visits by Sophia, Sheyna and Bastian had taught him the basic layout and they’d also made him curious about the rest of this world; he really wanted to see what a chocobo was.

He first went to find his room and found his trunk at the foot of a single bed. It wasn’t anything like the four posters at Hogwarts but it looked far more comfortable than his prison cot at Privet Drive. He changed into some normal clothes, a sturdy pair of jeans and a black hoody over a white T-shirt. “If I ever see Tonks again I’ll have to thank her for shopping for me.” He thought sardonically.

He made his way back down to the Main Level and saw the entrance ramp open. There was a group of people around on the outside and they were standing around what looked like some kind of building mostly buried under the sand. Curious, he walked out to them. He decided to try something and focused on turning himself invisible

again. He managed it easily and walked up to the men surrounding the building.

“They still haven’t come out yet?”

“Nope they were suppose to be back an hour ago.”

“Do we send a team after them?”

“Captain said they’d be fine and not to come down unless there’s an emergency.”

“That wasn’t very smart”

“She’s young, she’ll learn eventually and she usually does a decent job of supervising.”

“If you say so, but I think her father should just let her leave I mean she obviously hates this crap.”

Harry tuned the rest of their conversation out. He knew he shouldn’t go into the ruins. He knew he’d just recovered and if he got hurt again Claire would probably let him die. However once again his ‘saving people thing’ was telling him to go in and see if he could help. He tried to tell himself to ignore it and do the smart thing and return to the rig. Another part was saying he owed it to these people to try and help them. The latter eventually won out and he walked into the ruins. Not once did the fact he was unable to use magic cross his mind.

He followed the same path as the others and when he was in the weapons chamber he accidentally brushed a hanging shield. He heard a swooshing sound and something told him to duck. He quickly complied and just avoided being sliced in half by a swinging pangolin. He surmised to not touch anything in the future to avoid possible death. He made his way to a stair way and found a blocked door. However when he got near it the door opened. He cautiously made his way into the room and no sooner had he gotten past the door did it block itself off again. He turned around and banged on it slightly panicking. He calmed himself and surveyed his surroundings. There were lit torches all around the wall and what looked like pieces of

armor scattered everywhere. He walked up to the sarcophagus and studied it. It had a mural of a large man holding what looked like a huge scythe attached to a very long and heavy looking chain. The coffin was resonating with strong magic and Harry took an involuntary step backwards. Whatever was in there was seeping with power.

Harry felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up and turned around. Out of nowhere a sword came swinging toward his neck. Instinctively he raised his right hand as if it held a sword to parry the blow and amazingly it did. He now held his sword in his right hand and was holding off what looked like a suit of black armor. The visor was raised and there were two bright green beads of light where eyes should be. His assailant leapt backwards and came in for another strike with its blade. He blocked this strike as well and slowly felt himself being pulled into a rhythm. He just seemed to know what the sword wanted to do and he merely guided it.

The clang of blades echoed all throughout the chamber as each tried to gain the upper hand over the other. Harry was quickly tiring, but it seemed his attacker wasn't draining energy in the least. It was getting harder and harder to fend off his attacks and even though he did land a few blows they barely scratched the armor. He however did not have the luxury of armor and when the blade managed to slip through his defense its razor sharp edge made quick work of his skin. He now sported a long gash on his side from when a dodge didn't quite work out and a few nicks on his right arm. He knew if he didn't do something fast he'd be done for. He didn't have time to switch hands so he raised his left one and hoped for the best. He felt his magic pulsing through his body and focused it into his left arm. He really hoped this wouldn't damage his arm. "Explodra"

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Bastian had a headache. The winding passageways of what they now were pretty sure used to be a fortress. They'd left the armor chamber about three floors above and had passed a great store of things. However Sheyna had insisted that they not touch anything. He was inclined to agree with her now after having ignored the warning and paid the price.

They'd been in a room with a bunch of books. The titles were hard to read but he'd seen one that looked newer than the others and touched it. This proved to be a near fatal mistake because right after he touched it the walls in the room seemed to come alive and four large stone golems had surrounded them. Nothing seemed to phase them until Sheyna got the bright idea to use anti petrifying powder, or 'Soft' on them. That didn't kill them but it made them easier to deal with. A few slashes by Bastian and a Blizzaga spell by Sophia and they were home free.

Now they were walking in circles trying to find an alternate root back up.

"We were suppose to be back up about two hours ago." Said Sophia
"You think we could go back up and blast the door open?"

"I wanted to avoid that but it looks like we don't have a choice." Said Sheyna

"I'm all for getting out of here." Said Bastian

So the group retraced their steps and as they approached the stairway leading back into the armor chamber they heard the sounds of steel clanging together. They went up the stairs and arrived just in time to see one of the fighters raise his hand a shout "Explodra" A light shot out of his hand and hit the other figure and causing it to explode away from the figure who cast the spell. The torso of the armor was blown apart and the head and shoulder blades hit the ground with a loud clanging sound. The legs of the armor remained standing for a moment before toppling over themselves. The figure looked around and when he turned to face the new arrivals they were shocked to see who it was.

"Harry?" Asked Sophia in disbelief

"Hi." He said weakly. The fight had obviously taken a lot out of him and he was panting heavily.

"What the hell were you thinking coming down here?" Asked Sheyna
"Claire could have only let you out of the infirmary a few hours ago."

"I needed some air." He said truthfully. He had been tired of being indoors for almost two weeks

"How'd you get past the people outside?" Asked Bastian "They wouldn't have let you waltz in here on your own."

"I have my ways." Said Harry

"Someone toss him an Elixir before he bleeds to death." Said Sheyna

Bastian reached into a bag hanging from his belt and tossed Harry a bottle. "Just uncork it and gulp it down." He told him

Harry drank the potion and his wounds healed and the tired feeling ebbed away. "What's in those things?" He asked

Mix of Turbo Ether and X-Potion." Said Sheyna. Seeing his confused look she said "I'll explain later. Let's just blow this door open and get out of here."

She went over to the door and started fitting it with explosives. The group backed away and Sheyna detonated the bomb. The door blasted inward and the way was cleared save for some debris.

"Alright let's head back." Said Sheyna heading for the door closely followed by the others. As she approached the threshold a green light ran across the door and she ran into it before she could stop herself. She was blasted back and hit the others causing them all to fall in a heap onto the floor of the chamber.

"What the hell?" Asked Bastian

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Harry moaned as he picked himself up off the floor. "Looks like we're still stuck." He said to answer Bastian.

Suddenly the room started shaking and the sarcophagus in the middle began to glow. The lid disappeared and a huge hand gripped

the side. Slowly the head of what Harry could only describe as serpentine was visible. The huge creature flicked it's tongue experimentally in the air. It rose to it's full height and stepped out of its coffin. It had golden reptilian eyes which burned with power and stood at nine and a half feet tall. It carried a large scythe much like the figure painted on the coffin. It was covered in green skin and looked like a cross between a snake and a giant. Armor covered most of it even the long tail which had a barb on the end which presumably held poison.

"Who dares enter my domain?" He asked

The others pulled out their weapons and Harry realized they couldn't understand him "We mean you no harm." Said Harry "Please let us leave."

"What are you doing?" Yelled Bastian "Hissing like that won't make it understand you."

"I think not mortal." Hissed the serpent "I am charged to bring you to the underworld and that is what I shall do." He raised his Scythe and swung it straight at Harry. The wizard quickly leapt back and dodged the blow. Sheyna and Sophia were blasting it with ice spells but nothing seemed to be working. It's distraction was off Bastian and he was concentrating focusing energy into his sword. He sprang forward and drove the blade down with all his might. There was a loud crash as the blade met the armored torso and cracked in two. Before Bastian could move back the tail had wrapped itself around him and flung him against the wall.

Harry was busy dodging the Scythe swings that seemed to only be aimed at him. Besides attacking Bastian the creature seemed only focused on Harry. He didn't know what spells to try on it and he was also unsure of how they'd effect him if he used them. Deciding that he'd have to suffer the consequences later he moved his sword to his off hand and raised his right hand toward the beast. "Sectumsimpra" He thought. A red beam shot out of his hand and this time it only burned a little bit. The spell smacked into an invisible barrier which glowed briefly as the spell hit it. The spell was launched off the shield and slammed right back into Harry. Cuts appeared all along his body

he crumpled to the floor. This beast was going to take a lot more than what they had to defeat.

Wrath of Seth

Nothing was working. The creature seemed to have no weakness. Or no weakness that Sophia could exploit. She pulled out her crossbow and aimed at the beast's neck. It was distracted by Sheyna who was still pelting it with magic. She charged the bolt with lightning and sent it straight at the serpent's neck. Before the bolt could strike though it was knocked out of the air by the tail of the beast. Sophia saw that the rest of the group was incapacitated and knew it was up to her to buy them some time. She focused on the presence within her mind that she'd junctioned with two weeks before. "Shiva lend me your power." She thought focusing on the ice goddess. Suddenly her body went transparent and she saw Shiva materialize where she'd been standing. The snake hissed in rage and Shiva seemed to smirk at it before launching a wave of freezing air at it which froze it solid. She snapped her fingers and the ice turned into razor sharp shards which sliced the exposed skin of the serpent and made short work of its armor. Shiva disappeared leaving a damaged and angry serpent behind.

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Harry lay on the ground trying to recover his energy. Being hit with a backfired Sectumsimpra was enough to bring down the strongest of wizards. He was suddenly of his body seeming to shift out of existence and the air around him getting extremely cold. He looked around and saw a woman with pale blue skin and wearing not much of anything gathering ice energy in her hand.

"Why do you serve these humans Shiva?" He heard the snake ask. The woman, Shiva, simply smirked and launched the ice at the serpent. She snapped her fingers and the ice broke into shards and sliced the serpent over and over again. As suddenly as it started it ended and he felt his body reappear and with it the pain.

"Insolent humans!" Hissed the serpent "You shall not defeat the great Seth. Face my fury!" Seth spun his scythe through the air so fast it created a whirlwind. The suits of armor that were strewn about the room were collected within the maelstrom and a mass of whirling death was created. Harry saw the others straining against the pull of

the whirlwind and felt himself being dragged in as well. Thinking desperately he raised his hand and shouted the first word that came to mind. "Crucio!" He felt like he was forcing fire through his arm but he didn't stop. The red beam struck the invisible shield and shattered it. The spell hit Seth square in the chest and the snake collapsed to the floor screeching in agony. He writhed and twisted but Harry would not cancel the spell. The whirlwind collapsed and the others got back on their feet weapons ready. Harry felt his power draining quickly and knew he needed to cancel the spell. He did so and felt a backlash of energy. The power surged through him and the feeling was intoxicating. He didn't get a chance to enjoy the feeling though because as soon as his spell was canceled Seth's tail snaked out and wrapped around his abdomen squeezing tightly.

"I shall crush you for hurting me insect!" Hissed Seth. He used Harry as a new weapon and lobbed him with his tail smashing him into Bastian and sending the swordsman to the ground once again.

Sheyna was firing rounds like her life depended on it and in this case it very likely did. She was using armor piercing rounds and while the creature wasn't showing any signs of pain she was sure her bullets had to be doing something. She decided to stop playing nice and loaded a demolition clip into her rifle. She braced herself for the recoil and fired. The shell blasted a piece of skin off the reptile's torso and he screamed in fury. He swung his tail at Sheyna and she fired two shots right at it's base. The impact of the shells blasted the bottom half of the tail off and freed Harry from his impromptu binding. Seth roared in fury and swung his scythe in a deadly arc that Sheyna couldn't dodge. If it hadn't been for a hastily cast Protect spell by Bastian she would have been cut in half. Even with the spell she had a long gash in her abdomen and the wound looked like it was poisoned.

In a corner of the room Bastian was pulling himself together. Sophia was once again distracting the monster with Fire and Blizzard spells. He figured if she was using those she must be low on the high level spells. He decided to take the opportunity to see what spells the serpent had that he could possibly use against it. Focusing on the monster he saw that it had Meltdown, Pain and Quake. He concentrated on the first spell willing it to come to him. He felt the

magic flow into him and he immediately cast the spell. A ball of heat formed in his hand steadily gaining power it got bigger and bigger until he couldn't hold it anymore and he released it straight at Seth. The energy washed over him and sent him to the ground. Sophia cast a Curaga spell on Sheyna and her wound immediately stopped bleeding. She withdrew her Katana from its sheath and started slashing the downed serpent's side. A reptilian arm grabbed her and flung her against a wall. The stump of a tail caught Bastian off guard once again and he went into a crumpled heap. Sophia tried to hit it with a Firaga spell but Seth nimbly dodged it and lashed out with his scythe. The blade cut deep into Sophia's thighs sending her to the ground. She too was poisoned by the blade and was losing energy quickly.

Harry shakily stood to his feet. He saw Sheyna get thrown against the wall and Bastian struck in the back of the head with the remaining tail. He was so tired he could barely stand and when he saw Sophia get slashed with the Scythe he knew he had to do something. He didn't consider these people friends but they weren't enemies either and they had helped him. He concentrated on his remaining energy willing it to give him the strength to defeat his foe. He felt a surge of power and lifted his hand. "Expeliormus, Levicorpus" The two spells struck Seth from behind sending his Scythe out of his hand and stringing him up by one of his ankles. Harry wasted no time he channeled his remaining energy into his sword and unleashed his fury upon the serpent. He landed blow after blow cleaving off chunks of flesh every time he swung. Eventually he released the Levicorpus and let the beast drop to the ground on its back. He pulled his sword back and was about to deliver the final blow when he heard the creature speak.

"I yield." Said Seth "Spare me and I shall lend you my power."

"What do you mean lend me your power?" Asked Harry in Parseltongue

"I will offer you my services as Shiva does the girl." Answered Seth

Before Harry could get an explanation the serpent started to disintegrate and soon all that remained was a stone the color of its skin. The stone floated in the air and started to glow. It got so bright

Harry couldn't look at it. The light shot straight at Harry and entered his chest and made its way into his head.

"You are an interesting human Harry Potter." He heard Seth's voice in his head "I think I may like serving you."

"What?" Asked Harry "How did you get in my head, get out!"

"I shall not harm you human." Said Seth with an amused tone "Ask the tanned one about junctions and you shall understand. You should help your companions if you do not cure my poison soon they shall die."

"How do I go about that?" Asked Harry mentally.

"Use an Antidote." Replied Seth. He sensed Harry's confusion so he elaborated "A green vial."

Harry went over to Bastian and rifled through his bag. He found two vials and went over to Sophia first. He poured the potion down her throat and moved over to Sheyna where he repeated the process. Soon the two girls were awake again and a few Curagas later and everyone was only a little worse for ware.

"My head is killing me." Moaned Bastian "And that damn thing broke my sword."

"At least you don't have a scar running across your legs." Said Sophia "How did you kill it anyway Harry?"

"After Bastian did whatever he did to it I caught it off guard with a couple spells and had him where I wanted him." Explained Harry "Then I just slashed him a few times and brought him to the ground. Before I finished him he said something about lending me his power and he turned in to some weird stone and now he's in my head." He finished weakly.

"How did it tell you that all it did was hiss." Said Sheyna

"I can talk to snakes." Said Harry simply. The group looked at him and then they all shook their heads "What's wrong with talking to snakes?" Asked Harry

"Nothing it's just you're full of surprises." Said Sheyna. She walked over to the helmet of the armor Harry was fighting. She picked it up and two green orbs fell out. "Hey this thing had Materia in it." She said picking up the orbs. She examined them and then tossed them to Harry.

"What are these?" He said as he caught them.

"Materia." Said Sheyna. Harry simply looked at her. "Sorry, I keep forgetting that normal things to us aren't all that normal for you. Materia basically holds magic spells like I was using during the battle. Green ones like those are basic magic spells, red ones are summons, yellow are ability augments, blue are support and purple are independent." He still looked confused so she told him she'd explain it more later.

"You said he junctioned to you?" Asked Bastian

"Yeah he said to ask you about it." Said Harry

"That will take a while and we'd better head back up now." Said Bastian

"I'll need to contact my dad about sending some drones down here and removing the traps." Said Sheyna "There were a lot of weapons and gold down here and I saw some more Materia further down too."

The group wasted no time going back up and when they arrived they found it was already past sunset. The rig in the distance had several lights on and only a few crewmen remained near the entrance to the ruins.

"Captain!" They said with relief clear in their voices.

"Hey when did you go down?" Asked one pointing to Harry "I've been out here all day and I didn't see you go by."

"I have my ways." Said Harry cryptically

"Come on guys Claire is gonna want to give us a once over." Said Sheyna. She lead the group into the rig and straight into the Infirmary.

"What did you do to yourselves." Asked Claire looking at the many partially healed wounds they all were sporting. "And you!" She said pointing to Harry "What part of TAKE IT EASY do you not understand. I did not spend the last week taking care of you just so you could go off and get banged up again!"

"Cut him some slack Claire." Said Sheyna "He saved all our lives down there."

Claire didn't comment on anything else and simply cleaned all their wounds before casting a Regen on all of them and letting the wounds heal on their own. The only extra healing she did was on Sophia who needed a much stronger Cure spell for the wound in her legs.

An hour later found them all in the Mess Hall eating what Harry assumed was some variation of chicken served in some sort of tomato sauce over an odd yellow rice. It smelled good so he decided to take his chances. He ate while Bastian tried to explain junctioning to him.

"Junctions are basically symbiotic bonds between a mortal being and a Guardian Force." He began.

"What's a Guardian Force?" Asked Harry

"Right sorry." Said Bastian "A Guardian Force or 'GF' is an extremely powerful being who has transcended the mortal plane and wields power that most people couldn't hope to ever get close to. No one knows exactly how many there are but we do know that there are quite a few. They all sentient and the more powerful ones are a bit conceited. I'm getting off topic. There are other ways to summon GF's but Junctions are the easiest."

"I think I get that." Said Harry "So what does junctioning entail?"

"It allows you to draw magic from another being and use it yourself." Said Bastian "Remember what I did when we were fighting that serpent. I drew his magic out and used it against him. You don't have to cast the spells though, sometimes its better to just draw the spells and use them later. For instance if you were fighting something that absorbed fire it would be counter productive to case a fire spell you drew from it on it."

"I get it." Said Harry "Anything else?"

"Depending on the capabilities of a GF it is possible to use magic to increase your strength, speed and any other aspects that your GF is able to augment. As far as side effects go long term junctioning can result in partial amnesia. You can avoid that by keeping a journal, I do."

"You have a GF?" Asked Harry

"Not an offensive one but yes." Said Bastian "All mine does is cast reflect on a large scale basis. But he lets me augment my strength, speed, magical power and he even lets me absorb certain elements if I have my magic organized right."

"If their so beneficial why doesn't everyone try to get one?" Asked Harry

"Their not something you can just go and pick up." Said Sophia speaking for the first time. "The only people who usually have them are SeeD. There are only so many junctioning stones and certain GF's only have one."

"So I'm lucky to get one then huh?" Asked Harry

"Extremely." Said Bastian

"How'd you two get yours?" Asked Harry

"We...uh?" Said Bastian

“That’s a good question Harry.” Said Sheyna “You two said your not SeeD so how do you know so much about them and fight like them?”

“We got kicked out.” Said Bastian a bit shamefully “Rather I got kicked out and Sophia threw her chances away to follow me.”

“You didn’t do anything.” Said Sophia heatedly “All they had was circumstantial evidence.”

“It was enough.” Argued Bastian. “I ended up in the wrong place at the wrong time and got blamed for something I didn’t do.”

Harry sensed that he’d get no more on that line of questioning and quickly changed the subject. “You said you’d explain more about Materia Sheyna?”

“Materia is basically the civilian form of junctions. All you need is a piece of armor or a weapon with the right slots on it and you use your internal magic to focus on the particular orb. Say for instance I had this Fire Materia.” She released a green orb from her bangle and sat it on the table. “It has three levels of power I can use. First is a normal Fire spell. Depending on the casters magical potency this spell can do anything from causing a first degree burn or melting steel. Then we have Fira or simpler folks call it Fire2. This causes a lot more damage and affects a wider area. Next we have the last level, Firaga or Fire3. This is what you use when you need to make a whole in a group of opponents or you want to make an exit where there isn’t one. You have to be careful though using that level of spell takes a lot of magic and loosing control of it could be fatal.”

“What are the ones I have?” Asked Harry taking the orbs out of his pocket.

“You tell me.” Said Sheyna

“How?” He asked

“Just reach out with your magic and feel the spell contained inside you’ll know when you feel it.” She answered

Harry held one orb in his hand and focused on it. He felt a warm sensation similar to the spell Claire had used on him earlier. Suddenly he knew what was contained in the Materia "It's a Restore." He stated.

"Good now try the other one." Said Sheyna genuinely impressed. It usually took a person a few hours to identify Materia on their first try.

He picked up the second orb and focused on it. He felt a mixture of different things. Freezing cold, hard stone, strong wind and intense heat. "It's a Contain." He said "Why does it feel like it does four different things?"

"Because it does." Said Sheyna "To use that you have to really train your magic. At first you'll only be able to use the Freeze spell. Keep the fire Materia and practice with it when you get the chance."

"Okay I'll do that." Said Harry "How do you use the other types?"

"Blue and purple are simple." Said Sheyna "They'll act on their own all you have to do is regulate them and that'll come naturally. Using a Summon Materia is basically the same as calling a GF except you don't have to worry about the mood of whatever your trying to summon."

"What do you mean?" Asked Harry

"Oh I meant to tell you about that." Said Bastian cutting back in "You can summon a GF you have junctioned by concentrating on it's presence in your mind. The better you get along with it the faster it'll come. If you don't get along with it you could be dead by the time it decides to help you."

"Isn't that a bit...unreliable?" Asked Harry

"It can be." Said Sophia "But if you treat your guardian with respect you shouldn't have that problem."

"Anyway as I was saying." Said Sheyna "Concentrate on the presence in the Materia and it'll come and aid you. The difference

between that and using a GF though is that you have to use your own magical power to release the power in the orb.”

“Sounds simple enough.” Said Harry “What about the last kind?”

“Similar to using Magic Materia only you use less concentration and most of the time you don’t need to use much if any of your own magic.”

“Thanks guys you’ve helped me out a lot.” Said Harry. He stood up and stretched after yawning deeply. “I think I’ll head to bed now. I’ll see you guys in the morning.”

After Harry left the three sat in silence for a moment.

“What are you gonna do about him?” Asked Bastian turning to Sheyna

“Why do I have to do something about him?” She asked incredulously. “Technically he should count as part of the haul since we found him buried in the desert.”

“That’s horrible!” Yelled Sophia “He’s a person not a piece of treasure!”

“I was only joking.” Said Sheyna “The truth is I don’t know. If we turn him over to SeeD like we should do they’ll interrogate him and then probably try to use him as a weapon.”

“For a non SeeD you actually have them pegged perfectly.” Said Bastian “They’d pump him for all the info they can about his world and then they’d try and brainwash him to act as their good little soldier. I can’t condemn anyone to that.”

“What do we do then?” Asked Sophia “He is good in a fight but I’m sure soon he’ll start asking about how to get back to his own world.”

“He’ll most likely have to wait until the merger is finished.” Said Bastian

“How do you know there’s going to be another merger?” Asked Sheyna “It could be random.”

“The legends about the last offworlder said he had strange powers. He could change his form and do things that no one else could do.” Said Bastian “I don’t know if Harry can change his form, but he somehow managed to get past armed guards without being seen and he somehow managed to take down a ten foot super-serpent almost on his own. If I had to guess I’d say that whoever the last person was that came to this world before him came from the same place he did.”

“If that’s the case then it’s only likely that his world is next in the growing list of places to join ours.” Finished Bastian

“Temprus really doesn’t need anymore people to start another war.” Said Sheyna

“I can’t disagree with you, but there’s nothing we can do about it.” Said Bastian

“How long until we go back to the city?” Asked Sophia “Bastian and I really need to get back within the next two weeks so we can get a boat to the mainland.”

“When dad comes to deliver the drones you could leave then, but you’d miss your chance at getting much out of the haul.” Said Sheyna “It will take about another month to completely excavate the whole ruins and disarm the traps.”

“Is there any way you could maybe deliver us any weapons and gold after you’re done?” Asked Bastian “I’d like to stay but I really can’t afford that much more time.”

Sheyna’s eyes lit up at this. “How far are we talking?” She asked

“The abandoned warehouse in Lucca would be fine.” Said Bastian

“I’ll have to clear it with Pops first but 5,000 gil up front as well as 50 commission.” She said matter of factly.

“That’s highway robbery!” Said Sophia

“We’ll take it.” Said Bastian

“What!” Yelled Sophia “You’re not even going to try and get us a better price?”

“Nope.” Said Bastian “There are some good weapons in there and I doubt that half the gold will make a big difference when it comes to getting it transferred to Gil.”

“Smart man Bastian.” Said Sheyna

Sophia simply grumbled and marched out of the mess hall muttering something about stupid blonde idiots.

...

Two days later found Harry sitting on the roof of the rig watching what was called the ‘True’ sunset, the time of day when only one sun is about to set and two of the moons are visible. One moon was a deep purple color and the other was a pale yellow. Since the sun was almost set it gave the sky an interesting shade of orange and violet and against the desert it was oddly beautiful. He sat there letting his thoughts drift once again to his home. He wondered what had happened in the last two weeks. Had anyone else he knew died? Had Ron managed to fight off his possession or was it too late? Who was going to save the Wizarding World now that he was MIA? Neville maybe? The most important question on his mind at the moment however was how was he going to get back?

He was ashamed to admit it even to himself, but he had been contemplating simply not trying to find a way home. In this world he didn’t have the responsibilities of being the savior of the world or the pressures of being the number one target of a Dark Lord. He was just Harry. The people here had no idea who the Boy-who-lived was and it would be so simple just to forget his old world and make a home in this one.

"But you will not do it." Hissed Seth in his mind "Your sense of honor won't allow you to simply give up."

"You're right it won't" Said Harry "Don't you know why I'm here?"

"I can only hazard a guess." Hissed Seth "I am not in the inner circle of the Guardians and I am not privy to such information. However, I think that there are greater powers at work here than even the Guardians."

"It would make sense." Thought Harry "Fate seems to find it amusing to watch me suffer."

"You are one bound by Fate." Said Seth "No matter what you do you must complete your destiny."

"How can I do that when I can't even get back to where Voldemort is?" Asked Harry

"Sometimes it is better to live for the moment and forget about tomorrow." Said Seth wisely "The most useful information is that which you were not seeking."

"What?" Asked Harry aloud but he got no answer. He sat there watching as the sun disappeared and the two remaining moons rose. One was a pale blue and the other was much like the moon he was used to seeing.

"Watcha thinkin' 'bout!" Said Sheyna startling him out of his thoughts. He almost jumped off the rig in shock and she laughed merrily at his momentary distress.

"Ha, ha." He said sarcastically. "Aren't you a bit old to be acting so childish?"

"I'll have you know I am only nineteen." She said defensively "And everyone could afford to act a little childish at times. So I'll ask again what were you thinking about?"

"Home." He said sadly

"You miss it then?" She asked

"Yes and no." He said.

Sheyna was a little shocked by this response as she was sure he'd be itching to get out of a strange world. "Care to explain?"

"I told you I'm my people's only hope to win a war and it isn't exactly by choice." Said Harry "If I had it my way I wouldn't be some messiah I'd just be plain old Harry no extra responsibilities no Dark Lord trying to kill me and no abnormalities."

"Abnormalities?" Asked Sheyna

"At first it was being a wizard." Explained Harry "Most of the people on my world don't know a thing about magic so being a wizard kind of sets you apart. This wasn't so bad though since I like magic and all it has to offer. But I'm not even normal by wizard standards. See this scar on my forehead?" He pointed to the lightning shaped scar above his right eye. "I got this because a curse that's suppose to kill whoever it hits bounced off me and hit the caster."

"If no one survives it how did you?" She asked

"My mother did something." Said Harry "Some sort of ancient magic that requires a selfless sacrifice."

"So your mom's..." Said Sheyna

"Yeah Mum and Dad are dead." Said Harry "Happened when I was a baby though so I don't remember much. That's not the only thing that makes me different though. The fact that I can talk to snakes makes most people distrust me since all the other people known to have the talent have been evil."

"There's nothing wrong with being different." Said Sheyna

"Maybe here no." Said Harry "But things are different in my world." Wanting to change the subject he asked. "Why did you come up here anyway? Surely not for my wonderful conversation skills."

"Being that I'm in charge of this rig I don't need a reason to be here." She said "But this time I was looking for you. We've decided we aren't going to turn you in."

"Really?" He asked somewhat surprised. "I can't say I understand why you wouldn't."

"For one thing you saved all our lives in the ruins and we all kind of like you." She said cheerfully. "We don't want to put you somewhere where they'll treat you like some sort of animal."

"I appreciate that." Said Harry "I don't suppose any of you know a way for me to get home?"

"Sorry." She said "But you might find answers in Eshar."

"Where's that?" Asked Harry

"A long ways away from here." Said Sheyna "Their the most technologically advanced place on the planet. You could either go there or Mysidia and Eshar a lot easier to find."

"If Eshar is the most advanced place to go what's Mysidia?" Asked Harry

"Magical capital of the world." Said Sheyna "Although your chances of finding it are about one in three billion."

"Why's that?" He asked

"It never stays in the same place and is surrounded by a magical field which stoops you from seeing it unless you're a citizen."

"I see, so how do I get to Eshar?" Asked Harry

"It's not that easy." Said Sheyna "The only way in is by air and right now that's a no go thanks to the Black Wing faction."

"Black Wing faction?" He asked

"They are the closest thing to an actual revival of the Baron Empire." Said Sheyna "Somehow they've managed to procure a massive amount of airships and they don't take kindly to people invading their airspace. Right now they're at odds with Strife Corp. and it's almost at a full scale war. Spira stuck right in the middle since the Baron continent is on one side and the Gaea is on the other."

"I'm going to guess that those are where the two forces call their homeland?" Asked Harry

"You're catching on, good." Said Sheyna "That's exactly what I mean. In order to get to Eshar you'd have to either fly over Baron or fly from Gaea over to Myst. From Myst you'd have to get to Galbadia and that's easier said than done."

"You know what I think I've heard enough for right now." Said Harry "If I can't get to Eshar or Mysidia then what do you suggest I do?"

"For right now I can talk my dad into letting you work here." She said "I'll be delivering a bulk of what we find to our friends who are leaving tomorrow and you can come with me."

"Who's leaving?" Asked Harry

"Bastian and Sophia." She said "Shame though besides you they're about the only people close to my age I've seen since I started this job."

"I suppose that will work for now." Said Harry "Well g'night Sheyna I'll see you tomorrow I guess."

"Don't let it bother you too much Harry." She called after him

"I'll try." He said

...

The Grand Hall in the Crystal Citadel was in an uproar. Everyone was trying to speak at once and no one was getting through. However one thing was common within the rabbles of the assembled group.

“What is the Martyr doing out of place?”

“How will we proceed without the Arbiter?”

“Who is responsible for this!”

“ORDER!” Shouted dark clothed figure sitting above the masses. Immediately the group settled down and turned their attention to the speaker. “Recently we have been made aware of certain events the directly conflict with our interests. While this does hinder our plans it does not stop them.” He let his words sink in before continuing. “The Martyr has been removed so we shall simply find a new one. They shall be our Arbiter and bring about Total Completion.”

“What of the former Master Tribal?” Asked one of the assemblymen.

“He shall have his uses.” He said cryptically “Weather he wants to or not.”

“Have you found his replacement yet?” Asked another voice.

“We have.” Said Tribal “The process has already begun and the Martyr shall achieve its goals.”

A cheer went up through the assembled people they were sure that millennia of planning had been ruined, but now they still had a chance at achieving their goals. One figure however quietly slipped away. He wasn't sure who the new Martyr was but he had his suspicions and he needed to do something to throw a wrench in their plans. Everything depended on it.

The Wizarding World's New Martyr

Dear Ginny,

We just got into Rome yesterday. The city is beautiful, but of course we aren't here to site see. I decided I'd write you since I had some down time just to let you know that we're all fine. Fine as can be expected anyway. Harry is still all broody at times and your brother is well your brother. It would be nice if Harry stopped being a prat and let you come with us. For what we're doing an extra head and hands wouldn't hurt. Again don't ask because I can't tell you what we're doing. Some good news though is that once we finish up here we'll be able to rest for a bit. At least I hope so. We'll be heading out soon so I'll send Hedwig off with this now.

Remember to keep practicing Occlumency and keep up with your spell work.

Love

Hermione

Ginny put the letter aside and stroked Hedwig who was sitting on her desk. Harry, Ron and Hermione had been gone for two days now and that letter had arrived yesterday. Unbeknownst to them she knew exactly what they were doing which was one of the reasons she practiced Occlumency most often. When she'd found out what her friends and brother had been up to she'd been in shock at first, then anger for them keeping it from her and finally she accepted that perhaps she had been better off not knowing, thus was the eavesdropper's burden. "Damn extendible ears." She thought bitterly while looking at a flesh colored wad on her desk.

She had been dying to know what the infamous trio had been up to, so one day she decided to find out. She had lowered the ear down through a crack in the attic which was directly over Ron's room. She had learned all about the Horcruxes and the prophecy involving Harry. At first she had been shocked, then angry and finally she accepted the fact that they were trying to keep her from getting involved. Little did they know she was already involved. Through the diary she to

had a connection to Voldemort and while it wasn't on the same scale as Harry's it was still there. From time to time she would have feelings that were completely alien to her. She was simply glad she didn't get the kinds of visions Harry did. The nightmares about the chamber were enough for her.

Her musings were interrupted by hurried footsteps heading toward her room. She gripped her wand and turned to face the door. It opened and her mother was standing there slightly out of breath. "Ginny we need to go to headquarters now!." Said Molly

"What's wrong mum?" Asked Ginny "Is it Harry?"

Her mothers silence was discouraging and Ginny quickly ran to the fireplace and grabbed some floo powder. "Number 12 Grimauld Place." She yelled as she stepped into the emerald flames.

She arrived at Grimauld Place shortly followed by her mother. They were met by a solemn faced Tonks which in and of itself spelt dire news. "He's in here." Said Tonks leading them up to one of the bedrooms. Madam Pumfrey was standing over a figure with bright red hair who looked extremely haggard.

"Ron!" Yelled Molly pushing past Ginny and going to her youngest son's side. "What happened to you? How are you feeling? Where are Harry and Hermione? Their not hurt too are they?"

"I'm alright mum." Said Ron weakly "Ran into a bit of trouble in Rome."

"What happened dear?" Asked Molly

"Harry." Said Ron "He went crazy. We were down in the caves and all of a sudden he whips out his wand and...and..." He started to shake slightly

"He whipped out his wand and what Ron?" Asked Ginny

Ron turned and looked his sister straight in the eye. "He shot the killing curse at Hermione."

The people in the room gasped and Molly looked god smacked. "Are you sure honey?" She asked shakily

"I know what I saw mum." Said Ron "He did it at the worst time too. He waited till I was pinned down with some Death Eaters and Hermione was dealing with some vampires."

"Vampires? Death Eaters!" Shrieked Molly "What in Merlin's name were you children doing?"

"Let him finish mum." Said Ginny quietly "What happened next Ron?"

"As I was saying he shot the curse at her back, bloody coward." Continued Ron "Then he said something about usurping Voldemort." Molly, Tonks and Madam Pumfrey gasped at the name " And he ran. I chased him into some weird room and I was so angry I shot the killing curse at him. Hit him right in the chest."

The room was silent for a moment and Molly had tears flowing down her cheeks. Ginny simply felt numb. She couldn't believe Harry would kill Hermione and she couldn't fathom her brother ever casting the Killing Curse at anyone even if he was angry. She felt a great need for air and left the room heading toward the kitchen. She stopped and looked at the blank patch of wall where Mrs. Black used to hang. She had heard Ron and Hermione talking about how Harry had used the Killing Curse on the portrait and how his eyes had changed when he did it. They had said he was likely losing control and Voldemort was taking control of him. Could that be what happened in Rome? "No!" She told herself "Harry wouldn't kill Hermione and he wouldn't let Tom take over his body." She went over to the back door and stepped onto the back porch. The yard was overgrown with weeds and brambles and it was a depressing sight. This did nothing for her mood but the fresh air did help her think. Ron wouldn't lie about something like this he was Harry's best friend and she was pretty sure he was head over heels for Hermione, therefore he had to be telling the truth.

But if Harry had been possessed by Tom wouldn't Ron have had a tougher time killing him than just shooting one curse. And why would

he run and say something about usurping Voldemort. Something wasn't making sense. Ron's story just didn't add up. She was determined to get to the bottom of this even if it killed her. Little did she know it was likely to do just that.

...

The Dark Lord was confused. Two days ago something very unexpected happened. Harry Potter had disappeared. He knew he wasn't dead because of their link he could still feel the boy's presence, but it was faint and it felt as though it were being blocked by something. Whenever he managed to get through the link in order to pick up on the boy's feelings all he got was a jumble of feelings and blurs of images that came too fast to sift through and the images would leave his mind as quickly as they appeared in it. Another thing that his Death Eaters reported was that the Versai Clan of vampires in Rome which was under his direct control had been infiltrated. He'd sent Death Eaters to see to the problem but none of them had returned. This had him worried because he had something very important hidden in those catacombs. If Potter had been the one in the catacombs that day he could hazard a guess as to his purposes there. He resolved to check on his other hiding places. In the meantime though there was business to attend to.

"Severus" He hissed

"Yes my lord?" Said Severus Snape as he bowed and kissed the hem of Voldemort's robes.

"Are the ingredients ready?" He asked

"Nearly my lord." Said Snape "We are having difficulty acquiring the phoenix tears and unicorn's blood."

"There are unicorns in the Forbidden Forest surrounding Hogwarts." Said Voldemort "In order to find a phoenix you will need to do something to anger one. I believe I will work on this particular ingredient myself."

"Are you certain my lord?" Asked Snape although he instantly regretted it.

"Are you questioning me Severus?" Asked Voldemort softly but with a steely edge.

Snape mentally prepared himself for what he knew was to come no matter how he answered this question. "I was simply concerned..."

"I do not need your concern Severus." Said Voldemort still in the same quiet tone. "Perhaps this shall help you learn your place. Crucio!"

Snape writhed in pain and couldn't help but scream from the sheer agony of the Cruciatus Curse. He let it go after about three minutes and Snape staggered to his feet, bowed and swept out of the room as quickly as he could. Voldemort smirked amusedly at his retreating minion. Fear was such a good motivator.

...

Now Ginny was clearly confused. Ron had admitted under Verituserum that everything he told the Order regarding Harry and Hermione's deaths was true. This wasn't the confusing part though. The confusing part was the way Ron had been acting for the past couple of days. He'd seemed different, but Ginny just couldn't put her finger on it. It was little things at first. He didn't play chess, he was saying Voldemort instead of the usual You-know-who and he wasn't running terrified of spiders anymore. At first she attributed the changes to grief, but Ron didn't seem to be broken up about it at all. He recounted the story for whoever wanted to hear it and he didn't seem the least bit bothered anymore. If there was one thing Ginny knew that thing was Ron and while whoever was now downstairs at the Burrow looked like her brother, he was clearly a different person.

Even though he had admitted under truth serum the events that happened five days ago it still just didn't add up. Ron said he didn't know why Harry had done what he did and there seemed to be gaps in his story. Granted it must be hard for him but that didn't stop him from telling anyone else about it. She resolved to confront him about

it again. She left her room and headed toward the kitchen where it seemed Ron spent most of his time these days, not that he didn't spend a good deal of time in there before. She opened the kitchen door and found Ron staring out the window seemingly lost in thought.

"Can I help you Ginevra?" He asked without looking at her. There was another thing he kept calling her Ginevra instead of the abbreviation everyone else used. It wasn't just her though Fred was Alfred, Charlie was Charles and Bill was William.

"Sense when do you call me that Ronald?" She asked putting emphasis on his real name.

"Does it bother you that I use that name?" He asked "I bet it didn't bother you when he used it."

She didn't need to ask who 'he' was and this at least got them on the topic she had come in to discuss. "Speaking of Harry did you manage to at least destroy what you went there to destroy?" She figured it was no use hiding it since they were the only two who knew about the Horcruxes now.

"Whatever do you mean?" He asked

"You know what I mean Ron." She said "I know just as much about what's going on as you do."

He chuckled softly "Somehow I seriously doubt that. But if you're referring to what I believe you are, then I wouldn't know. Harry had it when he disap...died"

She chose to ignore his slip up and ask another question. "If you killed him then surely you took the Horcruxes off of him."

"I didn't have a chance." Said Ron "I had to get out of there or did you forget that I had a horde of vampires chasing after me?"

"I'm only asking a simple question Ron." Said Ginny

"You ask too many questions." Said Ron his voice now more harsh
"You would do well to stay out of my way. I am giving you this one warning because at one point we were close. I know you don't believe me and I don't care stay out of my way or suffer the consequences."

"Are you threatening me?" She asked heatedly

"I am only giving you a simple word of advice dear sister." He got up from the table and headed for the door. "You would do well heed my words."

"I am going to figure out what's going on here and you aren't going to stop me." Said Ginny "I don't know how you fooled the Verituserum but I can see through you."

"Be that as it may you are the only one and there is nothing a weak witch such as yourself can do about it. Shame though that your family will have to suffer." He said mockingly

She pulled out her wand and pointed it at him a spell on the tip of her tongue, but he was faster. "Stupify!"

...

"Wake up." Said a voice from far away "Wake up Ginevra!"

She slowly opened her eyes and saw a high stone ceiling. She was lying on hard stone and it was damp. The air was stagnant and the place seemed oddly familiar it was almost like the chamber. Looking around she realized it was the Chamber of Secrets all that was missing was....she looked around and her eyes landed on a figure with black shoulder length hair wearing Hogwarts' robes with the silver and green Slytherin patch.

"Tom." She whispered

"In the flesh, well not exactly." He said

“Why am I here? This is a dream it has to be a dream.” She said desperately.

“First of all you’re not dreaming.” Said Tom “Second of all you’re here because something is about to happen and I’m the only one who can help you.”

“Why would I want help from you.” She asked spitefully “You don’t help you hurt.”

He seemed to recoil at her words but he continued nonetheless “I am aware of what my diary did to you. I won’t bother apologizing since we both know you’d never accept that, plus I’m not the one who should apologize but that’s connected to the other matter.”

“Will you stop talking in riddles?” She asked “Or better yet just let me out of here.”

“I could let you out but then you’d have to deal with the real world and at present there are some things you need to know.” Said Riddle “The first thing you need to know is that for all intents and purposes the man known as Ronald Weasley is dead. As is Hermione Granger. Harry Potter is...well I’m not sure but he is definitely in no possession to oppose the Dark Lord.”

“You sound disappointed.” Said Ginny “Wouldn’t that make you just a bit happy?”

“You’d think so wouldn’t you.” Said Tom “However that is the last thing I wanted. I was actually hoping he’d find all the Horcruxes and finally release me to death. You see when I made the first Horcrux I did so with many insecurities and misgivings. That was why when I chose the part of my soul to place into the diary I chose the part that contained the majority of those. All the parts of my being that actually listened to what Dumbledore was saying and agreed. The parts that told me not to kill my father and uncle, that torturing was wrong all these were placed into that book.”

“You make it sound like you were a nice person.” Said Ginny “I can tell you that you didn’t have many misgivings when you possessed me.”

“I said that those things were part of the Horcrux. I never said how much of it they made up or what other parts of my soul were placed there.” Explained Tom “What you see before you now is the remainder of that Horcrux. Whatever good there was in Tom Riddle now resides within you.”

“What!” Asked a flabbergasted Ginny. She wanted no parts of Tom anywhere in her.

“I’m sorry to hear that, but there’s nothing either of us can do about it now.” Said Tom “This is the last time I’ll be able to talk to you like this and even now it’s taking a lot of my energy to maintain this connection. I need to tell you what happened to your brother so that you can understand. When the diary had possession of you it made a visit to a Horcrux which was hidden in the chamber. It modified the container of the soul to place it in the snake on a wall instead of in the cup. It couldn’t completely take the soul out of it but it put enough in the snake so that when it bit someone it could take over their soul. That is what happened to your brother.”

She didn’t know why she was listening to Tom of all people but what he was saying made sense. And as much as she hated to admit it she knew he wasn’t lying. One question kept nagging at her though. “Why Ron?”

“It was an accident is all I can fathom.” Said Tom “It was intended to target Harry Potter or Albus Dumbledore. You see I was almost certain that the diary would be destroyed and so a contingency plan was made. I knew that once the diary was gone Dumbledore would figure out what I had done and start searching for the Horcruxes. I figured that modifying the blood spell on the snake would guarantee me another shot at cheating death should the Horcruxes be discovered.”

“So Ron’s a Horcrux now?” Asked Ginny

"No." Said Tom "He is now his own being who most likely took all the negativity that Ron was harboring and used it to delude his being with that of a 40 year old Tom Riddle."

"And that means what exactly?" Asked Ginny

"It means that as long as Potter destroyed the Horcruxes he had with him when he disappeared all one would need to do is destroy Nagini and then Voldemort should be mortal again." Said Tom.

"What about Ron?" Asked Ginny

"He is either a prisoner within his own soul or he has moved on to the afterlife." Said Tom "I know of no way to break the enchantments binding him and even if there were a way after all he's done recently and indeed what he's about to do I doubt your brother could live with himself."

Ginny let the information sink in and something Tom said a while back suddenly clicked. "What's going on in the real world that would make me more prone to talk to you?"

"You do recalled getting stunned right?" She nodded and he continued. "I hate to be the bearer of more bad news but you are now the proud owner of your very own Dark Mark."

"I don't have the Dark...No! He didn't!" She yelled

"He did." Said Tom

"How do you know all this if you're inside my head?" Asked Ginny suspiciously.

"That's because I know everything you know. Everything Tom knew when he made the diary and everything that happens to the other Horcruxes including Voldemort."

"So does that mean..." She started but stopped herself because she really didn't want to know the answer.

"No Voldemort doesn't know about what the diary did to the other Horcrux. And he doesn't know what happens to them either. Our link is a one way street. Or at least it was until you got the diary. He paused as if considering something, he nodded to himself and continued "The diary formed a link between you and Voldemort. Right now it's no where near as intimate as the one between him and Potter but I think you knew that. What you don't know is that the link is now stronger thanks to the Dark Mark on your arm. Speaking of which I think you can figure out whets going to happen when you wake up."

"They'll think I'm a Death Eater." Said Ginny "He didn't hurt mum and the others did he?"

"Do you really want me to answer that question?" He asked hesitantly

"Just answer me!" She yelled

"Okay, you are now an orphan." He said bluntly. "Charlie took a Reducto to the head. Everyone else was out of the house so for now their still alive." She just stared at him in shock not knowing how to respond. "You know it's not as bad as it could be. I never had any parents and I even killed my father and...wait I'm not helping am I?" She shook her head still to dazed to respond more coherently. She just kept thinking over and over again "My parents are dead, Charlie dead."

"That's about the gist of it, yes." Said Tom jovially "Now about your current situation, you'll awake to find yourself in your room under a full body bind and an Incarcerus Jinx for good measure; if you think Momentum Reconcilare hard enough and focus your magic you might be able to break it. I say think because you don't want him to know what you're doing. One last thing before you go is to try the same thing for Accio Wand."

The world started to spin and all she could think was that Tom was a liar and not to believe anything he said. Her parents had to be alive this couldn't be happening to her.

When her vision stopped spinning she found herself staring at the ceiling of her room. She heard muffled talking from the other side of the door. She quickly started thinking the incantation Tom had told her, all thought of him lying was gone as soon as she awoke. "Momentum Restilare." She thought furiously but nothing seemed to work. She realized she wasn't focusing and tried to calm herself in order to tap into her magic. She felt the familiar warm tingling associated with her magical core and thought the words again and letting the magic shape to her wishes. "Momentum Restilare!" She felt the full body bind give and tried to figure out a way from the ropes binding her. She remembered Tom's last words and silently summoning her wand. She was able to grip it by twisting her hand in it's binding and grabbing it. The ropes were so tight the friction tore at the skin around her wrists. She bit down to keep in a gasp of pain and barely managed to banish the ropes in time for the door to burst open. Percy and Ron strode in followed by three red robed figures. Two she recognized as Tonks and Shacklebolt and the other was a tall man with dirty blonde hair and untamed looking facial hair. "Ron wasted no time and sent a disarming jinx which caught her in the stomach and ripped her wand from her hand summoning it to his. "I told you she was dangerous." Said Ron "I'm sorry I didn't believe you sooner Perce." He said to Percy "Look what Potter made out of her."

"He's lying to you Percy." Said Ginny desperately "That's not Ron, he's been possessed by something else, he killed mum and dad not me!"

"Check her wand Scringour." Ordered Shacklebolt

The man now identified as Scringour moved over to Ron while the others in the room all turned their wands towards Ginny. Scringour tapped his wand to Ginny's and performed the *priori incantum* spell. Green figures rose from her wand and took shapes in the air. Molly and Arthur formed. No one but Ginny seemed to see them glare at Ron before puffing out of existence. The next spell that came out of her wand was an exploding blue light that signaled the *Reducto* Curse. When it was over she felt her heart plummet. This proved that her parents and brother were dead and once more she was going to be blamed. She didn't even try to move when the stunners were shot at her and she was unconscious before they even hit.

...

Voldemort was confused once again, and also in a formidable rage. He didn't like the feeling of being confused and it only added to his rage. More than one Death Eater incurred his wrath because of this. He had just finished checking on his Horcruxes and was infuriated when he found four more of them gone. He knew Luscious Malfoy had lost his diary and he had paid for it. Now though he was beyond fury and it was all directed at Harry Potter. He couldn't find the boy and that impeded his plans for an upcoming ritual. The confusion began after his investigation in Rome. He had found that three people had entered the catacombs and only one came out. He was certain that Potter was not in the caves because of the bond they shared. All he had managed to discern from his visions was that Potter was somewhere with a lot of sand and some sort of worm. That didn't make any sense whatsoever to Voldemort so he had no clue where the boy was. He had read in the Daily Prophet that Potter had turned dark and murdered his best friend. He found this hard to believe knowing the boy the way he did although he couldn't say it would be a surprise if he did turn after all they were very similar. The next part though through him, Potter's other best friend claimed to have killed him. He testified under Verituserum that he "killed Harry Potter", but Voldemort knew that was a lie. In all the reports he'd gotten about Ronald Weasley he'd never suspected him able to fool Verituserum. That would take a powerful Occlumens like himself to accomplish.

As much as he hated the mood it was the perfect opportunity to use his rage as a catalyst for his magical power. He'd be breaking some heavy wards shortly and that required a lot of power. His spies in the Ministry reported tonight being a lax day in Auror duties and it would take them too much time to pull a team together in order to aid Hogwarts.

He appeared to the boundary of the wards in the Forbidden Forest. He then concentrated on pulling his magic into a high concentration. He was going to blast straight through the wards and the perfect curse to do the job was one of his favorites. "Avada Kadavra!" He yelled and a huge burst of green light shot from his wand and hit an invisible shield. The wards held briefly but they soon fell to so much

magic pouring into one point. There was a sound which was like a cross between a hundred glasses breaking at once and thunder. Owls flew from trees and small creatures scattered. The Centaurs in the forest heard the sound and immediately consulted the stars. They noticed that Mars was extremely bright.

Voldemort walked out of the forest and into the Hogwarts grounds. He walked toward a large white tomb which bore the name "Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore." He looked at the words with the utmost contempt. He took out his wand and started shooting the dark mark all over the smooth white surface of the stone. Soon he got caught up in his spell casting and moved on to more dangerous spells like Explodra and Difindo. Shortly thereafter Dumbledore's tomb was now rubble the covered body lay amidst the ruin still obscured by the black veil. He raised his wand and shouted "Incendio!" The body burst into flames and shortly after was reduced to ashes. He summed them into a conjured urn and capped it sealing it with runes to ensure that no one but himself could open it. He shot the Dark Mark into the sky and was going to leave when he heard a piercing cry sound through the air. He knew what it was and was overjoyed to hear it. For the sound was Phoenix' Song and a Phoenix was exactly what he needed to finish his plans. The crimson bird dived at him and he nimbly moved to the side to avoid being run through by the extremely sharp beak. The phoenix was bathed in red fire and charged Voldemort once again. "Mecolum venebre phoenicium!" He shouted while waving his wand in a complicated gesture to invoke the ancient Elven spell. A white ball struck the Phoenix and incased it in a translucent yellow pyramid. Voldemort reached down and picked up the incased bird which was still frozen in flight as if it were heading for something at a very high speed. He shrunk the pyramid and pocketed it. He needed one more thing to make his ritual complete he only needed a substitute for Potter.

...

Master Tribal sat in his quarters in the Crystal Citadel. He and his inner sanctum had been busy recently. He'd had to greatly alter his plans and that had set his schedule awry quite a bit. He turned when he heard someone enter his room.

“Is knocking beneath you Merlin?” He asked a figure in long white robes. “You may be the most powerful wizard of all time, but here you still owe me an epitome of respect.”

“I merely came to inform you that it has begun.” He said ignoring the reprimand.

“Already?” Asked Tribal getting excited “That’s excellent news. Our Arbiter will do perfectly. She may even work better than the old one.”

“What are your plans for her anyway?” Asked Merlin “Surely not the same as for the boy?”

“And why not?” Asked Tribal frowning “She’ll be a much better catalyst since female blood always works better in rituals.”

“You are simply going to allow him to gain THAT much power?” Asked Merlin in disbelief. “He could already rival me in power if you give him even more he could do almost anything!”

“That’s the idea.” Said Tribal “Once he gets that much magic he’ll be able to sense them and wake them up.”

“So that’s what this is about.” Said Merlin thoughtfully “I still think it’s too risky.”

“Make sure you don’t act on those feelings this time then.” Said Tribal “Your last little stunt cost me time and effort and it also knocked a key piece onto a totally separate game board.”

Merlin chuckled “I knew you’d figure it out.” He said “I won’t promise you anything Tribal but fortunately for you I have no idea what I can do to alter this.” He left the room and walked down the hallway towards his next destination. “I may not know.” He thought “But I am sure I know someone who does.”

Magic Lessons

Harry awoke late the next morning with a slight headache. His scar was slightly tingling but he couldn't sense any visions coming from Voldemort. That both worried him and gave him hope. If his link was still functioning it could be the key to a way home, but on the other hand if he could see what Voldemort was doing then it could work in reverse and Tom could try and follow him here and get his hands on some very powerful magic. Harry hadn't seen much of this world's magic, but from what he'd seen he knew that Voldemort should never get his hands on it.

He was also caught up on the fact that he'd cast the Cruciatus Curse successfully. He wasn't proud of that, in fact it sickened him to think he'd done such a good job with it. At the time it just seemed like the thing to do. His thoughts drifted back to that day in Grimauld Place when he'd used the Killing Curse on the portrait. He'd been so angry then about the way that hag of a woman had been talking about Sirius, and he'd been angry at Seth for throwing his curse back at him. His anger scared him because lately he'd been acting a lot like Voldemort when he was angry.

"Would you believe that there are those in this world worse than he?"
Asked Seth

"I'd rather not think about that." Said Harry "I just hope I don't ever run into any of them, but knowing my luck it's bound to happen."

Seth didn't respond and Harry got out of bed and headed to one of the four showers closest to his room. He missed the fact that the water had just been turned off when he walked in and he caught the sight of a completely nude Sheyna. She looked very different without her customary sand colored overalls and he caught himself staring at her.

"Hand me my towel." She said casually. He shook himself and handed her the towel. "Are you going to stand there and gawk at me all day or are you going to give me a bit of privacy?"

“He quickly turned around and left to give her some privacy. He heard her call after him “Red really isn’t your color you know.” He leaned against the wall outside the shower room and waited for her to finish. When she came out she was only wrapped in her towel and her hair was still wet cascading around her shoulders. “Shower’s free.” He nodded and walked in to take what was now going to be a cold shower.

...

A few hours later found Harry, Bastian and Sophia standing in the desert a few miles away from the rig. They’d been looking for some fiends in order to show Harry how to draw magic out of something. He’d managed to draw a few spells from the two ex-SeeDs, but drawing from fiends that were trying to kill you was entirely different from drawing out of a stationary human.

“Remember let your guardian find the magic and then pull.” Said Bastian “You don’t have time to find it on your own and it takes practice to do it without your guardian guiding you. Just fight and wait for an opportunity. When your in a group you can wait until the monster’s distracted and steal it’s magic then. Really it’s just common sense and know how.”

“Seems simple enough.” Said Harry

“Remember not to try and take too much in at once. The more powerful the spell the more likely you can be hit with magical backlash.” Warned Sophia

“Got you.” Said Harry

“Good because here they come.” Said Bastian pointing toward a hulking figure approaching them quickly. It looked vaguely humanoid but was clearly not human. It stood on two longs and had arms that reached its kneecaps. Attached to the huge arms were viciously sharp claws and on the creatures face were four teeth that stuck out of its mouth two from its top jaw and two from its bottom. The creature’s skin looked to be made out of some sort of strong metal which looked impervious to any kind of damage.

“What the hell is that?” Asked a shocked Harry. He’d seen some strange things since coming to this new world but this was by far one of the strangest.

“Armadado.” Said Sophia calmly “You’ll be attempting to draw magic from that. You’ll need to be quick about it though because the longer we fight the more fiends we’ll attract and the more dangerous it’ll be.”

Harry simply nodded and called his sword to his hand. He took a ready stance and waited for the creature to get in range. He focused on sensing the creature’s magic and allowed Seth to guide his conscience toward it. He was snapped out of his trance by Bastian yelling at him.

“Move!” He heard him say and leapt backwards just as a huge fist crashed down where he had been a second before. It seemed that the Armadado didn’t want to walk the rest of the way and had leapt the remaining 30 meters and commenced an aerial attack. Sand sprayed in all directions from the creatures landing with such force that it caused Harry to stagger slightly. The creature wasted no time and charged Bastian with an outstretched claw. The swordsman dodged to the side and sent a fist which looked to be covered in icy spikes at the creature’s face. The ice held Bastian’s hand and made a slight dent in the creature’s formidable armor. Harry was surprised by this but he didn’t have time to show it. He decided to ask Bastian about it after the battle. He started focusing on magic again this time not letting himself get too caught up. The creature changed tactic and raised one fist into the air and roared.

‘Brace yourselves it’s using Quake!’ Called Sophia It didn’t take long for Harry to figure out what exactly ‘Quake’ did because he was soon stumbling in an effort to remain upright. The ground was shaking violently and sand was shifting constantly. The monster stopped its spell and tried to capitalize on the group’s distraction by charging at Harry. The wizard was caught off guard by the charge and took a clubbing blow to his stomach which sent him flying through the air several feet and landing painfully on his back. He managed to keep hold of his sword and was about to charge back into the fight when he felt something shift inside his head. He sensed three things all at

once. One was like a roaring inferno, another felt like time was moving slowly and the last felt like shifting earth. He didn't know how he knew but he was sure that this was the creature's magic. He focused on the raging inferno and willed it to come to him. A blue light came from the creature who tried to struggle against the escaping magic, but could not contain it. The light headed straight for Harry and he allowed the new magic to seep into his being. It made a place within him and he felt warmth beyond belief at being so closely connected to magic. He instinctively raised his hand and pointed it at the Armadado. "Fira!" He yelled. A massive stream of fire shot out of his hand and engulfed the creature. It howled in pain as it's armor began to melt leaving raw flesh exposed. Sophia wasted no time in capitalizing. She shot a Water spell at the creature and followed it up with a Thundaga. The results were literally shocking. The creature was turned into a pile of smoking ash which was immediately blown away by a gust of wind.

Bastian looked at Sophia appraisingly "Was that really necessary?" He asked "I know we were trying to kill it but that was just brutal."

"Would you like to know what it feels like?" She asked innocently

"I think I'll pass thanks." He said "I see you managed to draw a few Fira spells." He said to Harry "How many did you manage to get?"

"Six I think." Said Harry "It was hard to tell."

"You'll get more used to it." He assured him "Fira is a medium level spell and for a beginner to draw more than five out at one time is pretty impressive."

"I suppose that's a good thing." Said Harry "I don't fancy doing that a lot more."

"If you plan on being here a while, which I don't think you have much choice in, you'll get used to it." Said Sophia "On the mainland you could stay in one of the big cities and hardly ever worry about fiends, but anywhere in the wilderness you are going to run into some."

"Thanks for the encouragement." Said Harry dryly

“Anytime.” Said Sophia cheerfully

“We should probably head back guys.” Said Bastian “Sophia and I need to get our stuff ready since we’re leaving tomorrow.”

“Why do you two need to leave before your prospect is finished?”
Asked Harry

“We weren’t expecting such a big haul.” Explained Bastian “We need to head back to headquarters since the rest of our group is scheduled to arrive there in about a week.”

“What’s the deal with your group anyway?” Questioned Harry “You say that you left SeeD or whatever and yet you’re looking for weapons and things.”

Bastian looked at Sophia as if questioning her silently she nodded and he turned back to Harry “We were both in SeeD because our families have been in it for the last five or six generations.” He explained “I was dismissed because one of my so called ‘friends’ decided to go off the deep end and ended up stealing something that is extremely classified. I happened to be looking for him when he was in the process of taking Grie...I mean the thing...and I found a bomb rigged to blow up the entire garden. I tried to stop it and while I was doing that someone saw me messing with it and called all the officers. They said that I was in league with Antym, that’s the guy who really did it, and they called for my immediate dismissal. They didn’t even stop to review the evidence or the fact that I had just disarmed the bomb and saved all their sorry asses.’

“I was forced to leave SeeD and turn over all my weapons and junctions. Sophia here resigned after that because she was one of the only people who believed me. We decided that since we couldn’t be SeeD we’d make our own way doing what we were trained to do.”

“So you’re mercenaries.” Said Harry

“More or less.” Said Bastian “We met some more people that needed to make some gil and had some interesting skills. We’ve got

connections in some good places around the world and we do have some minor influence. Although this has been creating a problem recently.”

“What do you mean?” Asked Harry

“It’s better if you don’t know.” Said Sophia “You’ve already got enough problems and you don’t need ours to burden you.”

Harry only nodded. He understood her reasoning all too well, because it was the same reasoning he used most of the time.

...

Later found a tired and bedraggled group of young people exiting the ruins heavily panting. Over the course of the week since the start of massive excavation more of the structure had been uncovered. There were more passages to explore and more inventory to catalog. Harry was allowed to participate in these since he’d be staying in the desert for a while and needed to know how to help out around the rig. It also gave him opportunities to practice with his magic and fighting skills. As they had just discovered some sandworms had connected some tunnels to the ruins. They had run a fowl of one of these and that was what had them running toward the rig for dear life. Harry didn’t want to press his luck with fighting ten thirty foot long worms in an enclosed area and was not ashamed to admit it.

“I still say we could have taken them.” Said Bastian

“We need a lot more then what we had to take out hem.” Said Sheyna “Those weren’t regular worms.”

“Yeah they were a weird blue color.” Said Harry “Then one I killed was grey and red.”

“Those were Stone Worms.” Said Sheyna “Their usually near heavy mako deposits.”

“Mako means materia.” Said Bastian thoughtfully “That means that place must be loaded with the stuff. We could make millions.”

"Mako is what exactly?" Asked Harry

"You don't know? They don't have mako on your world?" Asked Bastian

"If they do I've never heard of it." Said Harry

"Mako is lifestream that comes close to the surface and condenses into a liquid." Said Sophia.

"That's nice but I still don't know what it is." Said Harry

"You don't know what lifestream is either?" Asked a shocked Bastian
"Every planet is supposed to have that.

"If mine does no one has ever told me about it." Said Harry feeling slightly put out that they thought he should know something which he clearly didn't.

"Lifestream is basically the spirit of the planet." Said Sheyna "It runs through everything and is basically what gives life. It's what souls are made of. When someone dies their spirit is suppose to return to the planet and be used to make new life. Mako happens when the planet has an excess amount of lifestream and siphons some out into the outer crust. When that happens over time mako crystallizes into a solid which we call materia.

"So these orbs used to be someone's soul!" Asked Harry horrified while looking at the green orbs inserted into the bangle around his left wrist.

"Yes and no." Said Sheyna "When someone dies no one knows what exactly happens to their essence. Your soul is simply what makes you alive. Every living thing has a soul, even fiends. So it's not like you're using a piece of someone it's just the core material for life energy."

"I still think it's weird." Said Harry "And why wouldn't my world have lifestream?"

"Who knows?" Said Bastian "You should ask someone when you get home."

"If I ever get home." Said Harry

"Don't think like that." Said Bastian "You've gotta stay optimistic."

Harry looked at him like he'd grown a second head "You have no idea." Was all he said before heading off to his room. Sophia looked at Bastian and shook her head. Sheyna simply shrugged and headed off to report the latest find to her father.

"What'd I say?" Thought Bastian

...

A spirit drifted over the sea searching for something. It was confused It had started out as three fractions of a spirit with one being barely there. The next it was more aware and one spirit again. It was still missing a great fraction of its former state, but it could feel something pulling it toward a destination it did not know. The world itself felt different magic was seeping through the air much more thickly than what he remembered. The sky too was different there were two sons during the day and four moons at night. As the spirit drifted memories began to return to it. And with each memory came a different emotion. Childhood came with hatred. Hogwarts came with a longing and yet the contempt at the same time. Memories of a tall man with long auburn hair and beard sent fury and loathing through the spirit's being. The spirit also felt a need for power. It had to have it no matter what the cost. That is what had driven it to this form in the first place. The want for more power and immortality had damned it to a hellish existence neither truly alive nor dead.

Another memory came to it. A memory that was more recent than the last. It was while it was contained. In the Chamber of Secrets hidden within a goblet a presence had approached it.

"I know you are regretting your decision to imprison this piece of yourself here." Said a female voice. It sounded young and yet held

something else within it. The voice of a young man. It was faint but it could detect it.

“And how is this any concern of yours?” Asked the spirit

“I have the same regrets.” Said the girl “I have been forced to the point of using this girl to rectify something that should have never happened.”

“You are the first one then?” Asked the spirit

“Yes I am.” Said the girl “But I do not know which number you are. I could feel a presence like mine hidden here and I knew what I must have continued with my original plan since you were here.”

“If you share the same regrets how do you propose we rectify this?” Asked the spirit

“I propose that we combine essences.” Said the possessed girl “I will take a bit of what’s left of you and a bit of what’s left of me. Most of it shall go into the snake that guards the door and the rest will stay in the original containers.”

“And why would you have us diminish ourselves even further.” Asked the spirit

“It will all become clear once we merge.” Said the spirit “I know that my current plan here will fail. And you know that I always have a backup plan. I’ll have to leave some of my essence in this girl, but it’s a small price to pay for power.”

“Agreed.” Said the spirit as anything was better than its current pitiful existence.

And the merger had happened. The girl had brought the diary and the cup together and performed the ceremony for the bonding. It had required she take some lives so the other spirit which had control of her used its knowledge to go to a nearby muggle village and kill a few of them. That had been all the catalyst needed to take most of the spirits out of their containers and place them into the door of the room.

The snake knew that it wanted a strong body on par with its original in order to enact its plan for restoration. It had settled on either Albus Dumbledore or Harry Potter. That was the last it remembered of those events as that portion of its current being had been banished back to the goblet.

The other parts of its being were from the height of its life. It had been powerful, a man who was feared by many and revered by the rest. Most couldn't even speak his name for fear of his wrath. However once again it had repeated the hellish process of tearing one's spirit and condemning it to a fate worse than hell. Nothingness was pure torture for the active mind. Now though it was more whole than it had been since the start of its decent. The spirit could sense a strong life force from across the sea and it intended to claim it for itself.

...

It was the day of Bastian and Sophia's departure as well as the day Sheyna's father was to come to the excavation site and whit him about a hundred more people to take on the massive job of clearing out the ruins. With the heightened commission they were receiving the workers were more than willing to give it their all in the process. Harry met this day with mixed emotions. He was a bit nervous about meeting the man in charge of the whole process who's food and shelter he'd been taking advantage of the last two weeks. He was a bit sad about Bastian and Sophia leaving, he hadn't known them long but he was becoming pretty good friends with them. Bastian reminded Harry of Ron while Sophia reminded him of Hermione. Thinking about his friends brought more emotions to Harry this time grief , sadness and anger. The last was directed mostly at himself for not heeding the signs about Ron's state of mind and indirectly costing Hermione her life. He shoved these thoughts aside quickly not wanting to get caught up in and unending circle of depression.

He made his way down to the Main Level to see his friends off before they left. He found them standing near the entrance hatch with Sheyna and a tall well built man with graying red hair and rugged facial features. Before he could make his presence known Bastian saw him and beckoned him over.

“Hey Harry glad I saw you before we left.” He said

“This the boy you said has been working for you?” Asked the man turning to Sheyna

“Yeah that’s him dad.” Said Sheyna “He was being attacked by some Sand Lizards when we found him and we took him on board and patched him up. He says the people he was with just dumped him off because of some sort of disagreement.”

“Well he doesn’t look like he’d be much help.” Said Genson “What’d you say your name was boy?”

“Harry Potter, sir.” Said Harry ignoring his annoyance at being referred to as ‘boy’.

“Well Mr. Potter if you plan on sticking around here you’re going to be treated like everyone else who works for me.” Said Genson “for starters you’ll wear a uniform like everyone else.” He gestured around to the other workers who were scattered about in their sand colored overalls. “Second is you’ll work twelve hours a day and start at the minimum wage of four hundred gil a day plus commission. I consider myself a fair man so if you have a reasonable request don’t be afraid to let me or Sheyna here know. Also while you’re on my time you’ll address your superiors accordingly. I’m Mr. Ironhide. You’ll address any lift captains as just that, Captain. Understand?”

“This guy is a regular task master.” Thought Harry “I understand Mr. Ironhide.” He said aloud.

“Good because you start in one hour.” Said Genson “You’re going to be a point man.”

“Dad are you sure that’s...” Started Sheyna but her father cut her off

“He’s perfect for the job.” Said Genson “Besides we need one and no one else is going to do it. It’s the only opening I have for the rig.”

“What exactly is a ‘point man’ supposed to do?” Asked a worried Harry

“Glad you asked son.” Said Genson “You are basically the human equivalent to a drone.”

“Aren’t the drones supposed to go in and make sure that there are no traps and things on the items?” Asked Harry

“That’s exactly what they do.” Said Genson “You’ll be the one leading the charge. See drones need someone down there with them to make sure they do what their supposed to. You can see how most people wouldn’t want this job, but it’s all I can offer you right now.”

“It’s fine.” Said Harry “That’s basically what I’ve been doing anyway except now I’ll be working with machines instead of people.” He thought to himself.

Genson looked momentarily surprised that he actually agreed but hid it quickly “Sheyna get him a uniform and send him down in an hour.” With that he headed down the ramp leaving the foursome alone.

“Tough luck man.” Said Bastian sympathetically “At least this will give you an excuse to practice your magic. Try to expand your spell collection, you never know when it might save your life.”

“I’ll do that Bastian thanks.” Said Harry shaking the other man’s hand. He felt a slight tingling sensation and was vaguely aware of magic flowing into him. Three Floats, Two Esuna spells, One Tornado and Ten Blizzara spells.

“That’ll help start you off.” Said Bastian “It’s not much but it’s a start.”

“It was nice meeting you Harry.” Said Sophia “I want to thank you again for saving our lives.” She shook his hand and again he felt some magic flow into him. This time it was more than what Bastian had given him. He didn’t have time to sift through it. He felt the presence of Fire, Water, Earth, Poison and Healing. There was another too, it was similar to the healing magic except much more potent. “This should get you used to having a lot of magic and let you junction some.” She smiled at him and once more before she and Bastian headed out of the hatch. Harry watched them go happy

they'd given him so much information and glad that this wasn't the last time he'd see them.

"Well you'd better go get changed." Said Sheyna "Sorry about dad by the way."

"What are you sorry about?" Asked Harry confused.

"There's a reason he made you point man." She said "I don't think he bought the story about us finding you. He probably thinks you're a new boyfriend or something."

"But I'm not...I mean we're not." Stammered Harry turning slightly red.

"I know that and you know that, but he isn't likely to believe it." Said Sheyna "He could have found someone to be a point man if he paid them enough. You actually surprised him when you agreed."

"I figured that since I'd be down in the ruins killing the fiends anyway I may as well get paid for it." Said Harry "How long do I have to do this for anyway?"

"At a minimum I'd say two months." Said Sheyna "That's if we hit no more snags and the weather cooperates."

"What's the weather got to do with anything?" Asked Harry "We're in a desert it doesn't rain much here."

"It rains off the coast quite a bit and sometimes a big storm will come through here. Also there are the occasional sand storms."

"I see." He said "Well I'd better go get to work. See you 'Captain'." This last part was said cheekily

"Don't push your luck Potter or I won't hesitate to dump you right back where I found you." She shot after him.

"Is that any way to treat your supposed boyfriend?" Asked Harry enjoying teasing her. "I'm your dad's new point man you can't just drop me off in the middle of the desert."

"You can be easily replaced." She said casually "I mean what kind of employee ogles his boss' daughter while she's minding her own business in the shower."

Knowing when he was beaten Harry decided it was time to get changed and get to work. "I think I'm going to work now." Even though he knew he was beaten he couldn't help but throw one more jibe in before he was out of earshot. "It was a fantastic view though."

He was gone before Sheyna could form a response not that she knew what to say to that in the first place. Harry Potter was as much an enigma now as the day they had found him buried in the sand. The more she found out about him the less she understood and it was driving her crazy not being able to figure him out. She prided herself on being able to read people like books, but she was coming to understand that Harry was one person that just couldn't be figured out as easily as others.

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Merlin was worried. He'd gone through almost all of his contacts and none of them knew how to alter the ritual other than by directly intervening. That however was out of the question. The consequences of such action were too great for even him to bear. There was only one avenue he had left and he hoped that his old friend knew something he didn't. He was startled by a voice addressing him from behind.

"Ah, Merlin." Said the ancient looking man who walked into his quarters. "I see your seclusion to this place has dulled your senses. How is your wand by the way? Ash wood twelve inches with black phoenix feather core if I remember correctly."

"Hello Ollivander." Said Merlin "I see age has not dulled your stealth skills, and yes my wand is fine. I still can't figure out how you do that."

"I remember every wand I've ever made." Explained Ollivander "Now what did you need from me?"

“Are you aware of a ritual that Tom Riddle is planning?” Asked Merlin

“Which one?” Asked Ollivander “I know for a fact that currently there are three beings who would answer to the name Tom Riddle.”

“I would consider none of them to be ‘beings’ of any sort.” Said Merlin “What he has done to himself is despicable.”

“Be that as it may I will assume you are referring to the one who is currently known as Lord Voldemort.” Said Ollivander “If that is the case I am aware of a particularly vile ritual which involves several ‘questionable components.’”

“That is an interesting way of putting it.” Said Merlin. “If you know all this then am I safe to assume you also know why you are here?”

“You want to stop it.” Said Ollivander “However you know the laws and you know that you can’t. So you must want to change it so it achieves different results.”

“You were always a perceptive one.” Said Merlin “I have thought about this problem several times and I cannot think of a way to solve it.”

“To get the best results you’d have to make him stop right at the key point in the ritual.” Said Ollivander “When he transfers power into the vessel if you could somehow remove the vessel it would stop the ritual and his power would be lost to him.”

“That is an interesting idea.” Said Merlin “I have considered this but I don’t know how I can get the vessel away from him short of interfering myself.”

“So interfere.” Said Ollivander

“But the laws...” Started Merlin

“The laws say that you cannot directly interfere.” Said Ollivander “You have already been indirectly interfering for centuries and your last move was very daring I must say.”

“So what do you suggest?” Asked Merlin

“It will require that the time be synchronized during the ritual.” Said Ollivander

“That will speed the merging process and make it so that the continuation difference is substantially less.” Said Merlin “That would make things interesting for Tribal’s little plan.”

“I imagine it would.” Said Ollivander “Once you synchronize the time things should work themselves out and you’ll know what to do when the time comes.”

“I think I see where you are going with this.” Said Merlin thoughtfully “Yes this should work out very well, but do you think he’ll actually go through with it?”

“I still expect great things from him.” Said Ollivander “Very great things.”

Eclipse of the Light

Minerva McGonagall, Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and leader of The Order of the Phoenix, was having a very stressful and trying day. First there was an emergency meeting of the Order to discuss the defection and death of Harry Potter. There had been many ideas about the topic, but none more outspoken than Remus Lupin. He had insisted that Harry would never do something like that and that he was not dead. He had no bearing for that claim only that he would know if the boy was dead and that he was not. His claim about Potter not killing Hermione Granger was equally lacking in evidence. The order was aware of Harry's increasing aggression and his incessant secrecy following Albus' death was another reason why many of the Order were convinced that Ron's story was the truth. They had given the boy Verituserum to verify his story and he had passed. However Alastor Moody had insisted on reviewing all the evidence, he knew that the potion could be fooled and was convinced that Ron was untrustworthy. So now the order was divided at a time when such division could cost lives.

Another down point in her day happened shortly after the order meeting. She had received word from Nymphidora Tonks that there had been an 'incident' at the Weasley family home of "The Burrow". According to Tonks Moll, Arthur and Charlie Weasley had all been killed by the family's only daughter, Ginevra. Tonks reported that Ron Weasley had managed to subdue his sister after dodging a cutting hex that had been aimed at his head. Tests had been conducted on the girl's wand and her brother was questioned under Verituserum once again. The results had been the same as before. This news disturbed Minerva greatly. Ginny was the last person she'd expect to join the forces of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named. She remembered the boy Tom Riddle. They had been class mates and she had always thought him a little odd and being from Slytherin automatically put him in the category is rival if not flat out enemy. However she never thought that he would be the worst thing since Grindlewald.

Now though was the most disturbing thing of the night. She had left Hogwarts responding to several distress calls in Diagon Alley. She had deemed it safe enough with the wards and with no students it wasn't likely to be attacked. She had been proved wrong because

while she'd been at Diagon Alley with the Order and Ministry Aurors engaging Death Eaters the wards had been breached. Being Headmistress she was immediately notified by the school itself. She had quickly apparated to the school gates and rushed to see what could have gotten through the wards. She saw the Dark Mark in the sky above the grounds near the link. When she got there what she saw made her blood run cold. The Dark Lord himself was there and he was holding some kind of urn. She had heard a loud trilling and saw a flash of red dive at Voldemort. The Dark Lord had used some complicated spell and entrapped the phoenix in a glowing yellow pyramid. He then laughed a high pitched maniacal cackling which caused her to shiver involuntarily. He then disappeared taking the urn and the encased phoenix with him. She saw that Dumbledore's tomb was in ruin. The once glorious white structure was now more than charred and smoking rubble. She looked closer at the tomb and found that the body which had been encased inside was gone. What would Riddle possibly want with Albus' body was beyond her. She realized how out of her league she was fighting this war. Dumbledore's death was the worst thing that could have happened at this point in the war, and Harry's Potter's loss was not far behind it on the list of things that could end the war in failure.

She now sat in her office looking at the portrait of the late headmaster. "What am I going to do Albus?" She questioned the painting.

"You shall find a way to persevere Minerva." Said Dumbledore "I am in no position to tell you how to lead this war. I can only offer you some advice. What Tom has been gathering seem to me to be components for a ritual. You should find out which one and do everything in your power to stop him."

"What in Merlin's name could he possibly be doing with all of those things?" Asked McGonagall "He has your ashes, Fawkes and who knows what else."

"I shudder at the thought Minerva." Said Dumbledore his eyes devoid of a twinkle of any sort. "However my ashes are most likely still seeping with magic. The tomb would have held in most of my magical core from dispersing from my body. This means that whatever he uses them for will have almost all of my magical power behind it."

Minerva gasped "You don't think he could be trying to take it for himself do you?" She asked hoping against hope that the answer was no.

"I am afraid that is the only logical reason I can see for him to want my remains." Said Dumbledore.

Minerva wasted no time she pulled out a Chocolate Frog card with a blank face on it. It bore the name Albus Dumbledore and to any onlooker that is who's card they would see. However to an Order of the Phoenix member this card was their contact to and from other members. She held the card up and spoke calmly but commandingly. "Attention all members. There is an emergency meeting top priority all members report to Hogwarts immediately, drop all missions and report now, repeat drop all missions and report now." This situation required immediate action and she hoped that she wasn't already too late to stop it.

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Ronald Weasley was literally living in hell. He could see everything he was doing but he couldn't do anything to stop himself. He felt like he was riding in the passenger seat of a muggle car and not being able to control a thing the driver was doing no matter how much he desperately wanted to. He'd been able to fight it at first. He had wanted to tell Harry and Hermione to warn them that something was inside him trying to take over, but every time he tried the spirit that invaded him would fight him all the more harder. He had started losing momentary control of his actions; he found himself doing and saying things he'd normally never do. Then that day in Rome he'd totally lost control. It had just been too much for him. He was screaming inside when he saw himself point his wand at Hermione and shout the Killing Curse. He had wanted to die right then and he was praying to Merlin that Harry finish him off right there, but Harry hadn't finished him off. He had been too shocked. The spirit inside Ron had capitalized and started throwing Killing Curses at Harry. After the two had exchanged words Ron realized how bad his circumstances really were. He hadn't realized that the spirit had come from the chamber and then he knew exactly who's spirit had control

over him and why it was so hard to fight. He was Voldemort's puppet and there was absolutely nothing he could do about it.

As if Hermione and Harry hadn't been bad enough then the monster had gone on to attack his family. Once Ron had realized exactly what was happening he'd tried to mentally shout at the spirit in hopes of shaking its concentration. This had been a desperate and foolish move. Now that the spirit knew he could do that it had started taunting him mentally saying things like "Watch how much I can make your mother scream." Or "Was that your brother's head?" And worst of all "How do you think your sister is going to like being accused of triple murder and being a Death Eater?"

Then he started outlining his plans and what exactly was in store for Ron. Ron had asked why he was doing this and the spirit had simply said to blame Harry Potter. This had made Ron extremely angry. It was all a plan to try to get at Harry. It was always something to try and hurt his best friend. Ron didn't know what had happened to Harry and neither did the spirit. It had tricked the Veritaserum and the Wizarding World being as fickle as it was believed that their once "Chosen One" was on his way to being the next Dark Lord and had died a traitor. Ron promised himself that no matter what he would never blame Harry for what happened to him. It wasn't his friend's fault it was all Tom Riddle.

Now his body was at the Ministry outside a room holding his sister. Shackbolt was with him and Ron knew that Moody was somewhere close by. He was glad the retired Auror didn't trust him. Ron could only hope that he would end up killing him so he could be free.

"You'd like that wouldn't you." Asked Riddle "To escape and not have to endure this horrible experience anymore."

Ron remained silent not wanting to converse with his tormentor.

"You know if you don't talk to me I'll have to go and bother someone else for company. I wonder if Ginny wants to chat?"

"Yes go in there and maybe she'll find a way to kill you." Said Ron in a monotone

"We'll see soon enough." Said Riddle "It looks like the blood traitor just got a call on his card." He said pointing to Shackbolt.

Ron saw Kingsley talking into what looked like a Dumbledore Chocolate Frog card. He couldn't hear what he was saying but he could tell by the look on his face it was important. The Auror glanced at the door holding Ginny and then looked at Ron. Ron realized what he was about to do and was mentally shouting "No, NO!" but his pleas were only heard by one who merely laughed at them.

"Will you be alright here by yourself?" Asked Kingsley once again glancing at the holding room.

"She's unarmed and locked in tight." Said Riddle through Ron's voice. "It looked important."

"It was for all members." Said Kingsley "You really should be there, but since you aren't official yet I'll draft you as a temporary Auror and have you guard this door.

"I don't see there being a problem." Said Riddle "Will you at least be able to tell me what the meeting was about?"

"I'll have to clear it with Minerva but I'm sure it won't be a problem." Said Kingsley.

He left for the lift and when he was out of sight Ron turned to the door and opened it. Ginny was sitting in a hard wooden chair in the middle of a room devoid of anything but four empty grey walls.

She looked at him with the utmost contempt. It pained Ron to see his sister look at him that way, but he knew it wasn't him she was directing it at it was for the spirit controlling them.

"Come to gloat again Tom?" She asked snidely

"Always the feisty one." Said Riddle "I actually came to help you escape."

“So you can add to the image of me being a Death Eater?” Asked Ginny incredulously “Thank you, but no thank you.”

“You won’t have much of a choice soon.” Said Riddle “Everyone left in this department right now is about to die and you are going to be the cause.”

“I’m unarmed and bound to a chair.” Said Ginny as if she was talking to a child “How am I supposed to kill anyone. You know Ron was a bad choice for you if you wanted brains.”

“Ouch.” Said Ron although deep down knowing there was some truth to that comment.

Riddle simply smirked and reached into his robes and pulled out Ginny’s wand. He waved it and she was immediately unstuck from the chair. Before he could toss her the wand he had to dodge to the side as a bone breaker hex came at him from behind. He turned around and saw Alastor Moody with his wand trained on him.

“Interesting story there Weasley.” Said Moody “Too bad you won’t be leaving this room to tell it.” He sent a Reducto at Ron’s head but Riddle conjured a strong shield and the curse was sent back at Moody. Not in the mood for playing around Riddle went straight for the kill. Albeit in a somewhat unorthodox way.

“Do you know how to use the summoning charm to kill a man ‘Mad Eye’?” Asked Riddle. “It takes a great deal of power to perform correctly and only a few wizards can do it properly.” He waved his wand and said “Accio Magical Eye!” Moody gasped in pain as his magical eye was forcibly pulled from his socket and came to Ron’s hand.

Moody quickly realized he was in trouble if the boy could summon body parts. He waved his wand around himself and said “Preventum Accio!” This would make it so Ron couldn’t summon anything on Moody’s person. Ron was caught off guard as something slammed into his side and tackled him to the ground. His sister was upon him and was trying to beat the living daylights out of him with her bare hands. He used his considerable body mass to his advantage and

pushed her off of him. He was about to hit her with a full body bind but he had to dodge another of Moody's curses. He decided to take out the Auror once and for all and then deal with the youngest Weasley. He shot the Killing Curse at the ex-Auror but the man was very nimble despite having a fake leg. The noise in the room had attracted the attention of the other on duty Aurors who immediately started firing hexes at Ron. Inside of his mind Ron was hoping against hope that one of these Aurors would kill him.

"Not a chance Weasley." Said Tom "You're about to find out why people are afraid to speak my name. Remember the summoning charm?" He sent Ron a mental image of what he was about to do.

"You sick bastard!" Yelled Ron in his mind. Riddle merely laughed and raised Ginny's wand above his head and shouted "Accio Hearts!" Ron watched in horror as the assembled Aurors held their chests in pain as their heart was wrenched from their hearts were wrenched out of their chests in an explosion of blood and bone. Everything in the room was covered with it. The only people not affected by the powerful summoning charm were Moody and Ginny. The former because of his anti-summoning charm and the latter because Ron hadn't been focusing on her when the spell was cast. Moody roared in fury at seeing the deaths of nearly twenty Aurors. He knew he was dealing with someone very powerful and way out of even his league. However this didn't mean he was going to give up. Ron found this out rather quickly thanks to a bone breaking hex he barely dodged. It had hit his off hand and now it hung uselessly at his side. He sent a particularly nasty curse at Moody which was supposed to make the receiver's organs liquidize. Moody managed to dodge the curse but it impacted the wall behind him sending some shards into the ex-Auror's back. Moody staggered on his feet as stone pelted his head. This was all the opportunity Ron needed. He leveled Ginny's wand and shouted "Avada Kadavra!" The curse struck Moody in his gut and he crumpled to the ground in a lifeless heap. Ron turned around and surveyed the area. There were bodies everywhere from a corner of the room he saw Ginny staggering to her feet. She had been momentarily dazed by impacting the wall when she'd been thrown off Ron. He turned her own wand on her and said "Crucio!" He saw her try to bite down a scream as the curse struck her. She managed it for a whole two seconds before the pain became too much and she

started to thrash and scream in agony. He left the curse on for a whole two minutes and Riddle enjoyed watching her suffer. Ron on the other hand was horrified. He had never seen anything like what had happened in the room before and he knew it was only the beginning unless someone was able to stop him. He fought with everything he had against the malicious spirit controlling him. Riddle was caught off guard so caught up in torturing Ginny he'd loosened his hold on Ron. The youngest Weasley son had regained control of himself but he felt it slipping fast. He tossed his sister her wand and she looked at him in surprise but still with the underlying hatred. "Pick it up." He ordered urgently "Kill me before he takes...ahh!" He screamed in pain as the spirit fought against him.

"Ron!" Yelled Ginny "Fight him you can do it!" She said trying to encourage her brother.

"I can't take it much longer DO IT!" He yelled while holding his head in pain.

"She'll never do it Weasley." Taunted Riddle in his mind "She doesn't have what it takes to kill her own flesh and blood."

Ginny grasped her wand and pointed it at Ron. Riddle started gaining some control and headed for the door. He had wanted to grab Ron's wand but he didn't have control of the arms yet only the legs. He made it out of the ruined door and Ginny was right behind him. She pointed her wand at him and Ron fought with all his might to keep still so that the curse wouldn't miss. "Avada Kadavra!" Yelled Ginny. A green light shot of her wand and everything seemed to slow down. Riddle was screaming in fury that he had failed and Ron was happy that his nightmare was about to end. This all changed when he heard a voice say "Accio Ron!" He felt himself being pulled out of the path of the curse which was mere seconds from ending his pain. He let out a howl of despair as he saw the curse strike the wall behind where he'd been standing. He looked up into the face of his rescuer and felt all his strength ebb away. His twin brothers were standing at the end of the hallway looking ashen faced. Riddle laughed heartily at the irony of the situation in an effort to save their younger brother the twins had inadvertently damned him to his own personal hell.

“So it’s all true.” Said one of the twins.

“I didn’t want to believe it Fred” Said George

“Our little sister...” Said Fred

“A bloody Death Eater.” Finished George

“Why?” They both asked in unison.

“I am not a Death Eater!” Shouted Ginny “It’s all Ron, you have to stop him!” She pleaded with her brothers

“Shut up traitor.” Said Ron once again under Riddle’s complete control “You’ve got the mark and you just shot a killing curse at me, and look what you did to all those people!”

“It was you!” Shouted Ginny “Fred, George you have to believe me!” Tears of desperation were streaming down her face and for a moment Fred and George looked to be wavering, until Ron spoke again.

“You were always a good actor Ginny.” Said Ron “Those fake tears are a nice touch, but they don’t fool anyone anymore. Mum and Dad fell for them and look what happened to them.”

The twins’ demeanor immediately hardened at this and they glared at their sister. “You had better leave her Ginny.” Said Fred

“This is the last kindness you’ll ever get from us.” Said George “If we ever see you again we won’t hesitate to do what needs to be done.”

Ron couldn’t believe what he was hearing. Surely they could tell that Ginny wasn’t faking? He watched his sister’s eyes lose any signs of hope at this and they suddenly were devoid of any of the fire that had once been in them. Then something in her eyes changed the warm fire that used to burn behind her brown eyes turned into something else. It was like a cold fury and it scared him slightly. He knew his sister was a powerful witch and he could feel the power radiating off

her. Her emotions were running wild and her magic was responding accordingly. She raised her wand and shot another Killing Curse straight at Ron. He was forced to dodge it even though he was trying desperately to simply run into it. The twins let out angry growls and started hurling spells at her. She glanced at Ron for a split second and he saw a deep sorrow in her eyes. He wished he could make it go away because it killed him to see his sister look like that and know that he was the cause.

"Isn't it wonderful?" Asked Tom "I'm turning your whole family against her. She'll have no where to go and suffer without even knowing why."

"Why her?" Asked Ron "Isn't it enough for you to torture me?"

"I suppose I can tell you." Said Riddle "It's not like you'll be telling anyone. However I think you already know why she has to suffer. Since Potter is gone she's the next best thing. You know she fought me a lot harder than you did when she had the diary? I found out some interesting things about her and she's just so fun to watch suffer. Plus hurting her hurts you and that always good for a laugh."

"You won't win." Said Ron

"And who is gong to stop me?" Asked Riddle "Precious Potter abandoned you all and now everything you love..." He said the last word with contempt "...will be destroyed by either me or what's left of the original me."

"Harry's not dead." Said Ron "You know what the prophecy says and you know he'll come for you one day." Ron came to a realization at these words "He scares you." He stated.

"I fear nothing!" Yelled Riddle "I am not afraid of anything and especially not something as insignificant and weak as Potter."

"You fear death." Said Ron "And you know Harry has the power to kill you and that scares you."

“Silence!” Hissed Riddle sending waves of pain through Ron’s being. It was the worst pain he’d ever felt like hot needles digging into every inch of his body, being frozen and burning alive all at the same time. He screamed mentally and just wished for the pain to end, but he knew it wouldn’t.

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Ginny felt crushed. She now had no where to turn. She was certain that Bill was of the same state of mind as the twins and would sooner curse her than listen to her. As she dodged her brothers’ curses while running down the corridor looking for an escape route she felt betrayed. Her brothers weren’t even listening to her. They were too ensnared with what Ron was saying to see reason. No she reminded herself. That thing was not her brother. Ron was the one who had begged her to kill him. It saddened her to hear the desperate plea in her brother’s voice. She knew how he must be feeling having been in a similar situation herself. She knew he could see everything he was doing and that only made her feel worse. She ducked a Reducto sent by Fred and dodged a Cutting Hex sent by George. It was very difficult to dodge the spells since she was still racked by the after effects of the Cruciatus Curse and Fred and George had always been good at flinging curses. She saw a support beam for the ceiling and had a sudden idea. She focused as much magic into one spell as she could and fired a Reducto at the beam. The wards preventing this sort of thing kicked in but the curse ripped through them and shattered the beam. Rubble rained down into the Auror department cutting her off from her brothers and leaving a hole in the ceiling leading up to the floor above. She climbed over the rubble ignoring the sharp pieces that dug into her hands and knees. Once she was on the next floor she ducked into the first office she saw with a fireplace. There weren’t many people in the Ministry this time of night and the office was empty. She saw the Floo Powder on the mantle and grabbed a handful in one hand while lighting the fire with her wand in the other. She threw the powder into the fire and stepped into the emerald flames. There was only one place she could think of to go and only one person she could think to trust. “Lovegood Residence!” She called out.

She started to spin and passed several grates and many people going in and out from place to place. No one spared her a glance as

most had their eyes closed to prevent the dizzying effects of this form of travel. She saw her grate approaching and braced herself. She shot out of the fireplace and stumbled a lot more than she meant to. There was a sharp pain in her left kneecap and she looked down to see a large piece of shrapnel lodged below just the joint. Her muggle jeans were in tatters and she was covered in blood. She was a right sight and she hoped that Luna wouldn't scream when she saw her. Knowing Luna though she would probably act like she didn't notice.

"Ginny," Said an airy voice behind from the doorway of the sitting room. "How nice to see you." She finished as if it was perfectly normal for one of her friends to come into her home in the middle of the night with blood dripping all over them. "You should really clean yourself up. Shreegles are attracted to a lot of blood."

Ginny simply nodded not really knowing what to make of her friend's behavior. Luna waved her wand and the excess blood vanished. She then made another series of wand movements this time at Ginny's leg and removed the shrapnel before sealing the wound. She ushered Ginny into the kitchen and they both sat down at the table. Luna looked Ginny in the eye and her usually dreamy gaze went totally away. "What happened?" She asked

"Surely you read the papers?" Said Ginny

"I only read The Quibbler" Said Luna "We only print true articles and you and Harry turning to the dark side is not true."

Ginny was surprised that her friend was being so serious, but she supposed it was a good thing since she really didn't want to deal with Luna's eccentricity at the moment. Ginny told her everything that had happened not caring about secrecy involving the Order or the fact that tears were now streaming down her face. She talked about finding out the Harry was dead and about her parents and Charlie being killed by Ron who was under the control of Tom Riddle. Luna didn't seem surprised at any of this and only nodded while Ginny told her tale. The most recent events were coming back to her she raked with sobs and Luna pulled her into a warm embrace. Ginny let out all her pent up emotion go and cried for all the loss, pain, sadness and anger she'd felt for the last week. It was a long time before the tears

stopped, but when they finally did Ginny was left with a morbid determination. She would do everything in her power to stop Riddle and free Ron from the hell she knew he was facing. There was also the matter of Voldemort. She didn't delude herself that she'd be a match for the Dark Lord, but she wasn't the type of person to do nothing. She resolved that if she saw any Death Eater she would make them regret the day they took the mark. She looked at her left forearm where the skull with a serpent coming out of its mouth stared back at her. Every so often she'd feel the mark burn and it was getting worse each time. She'd been able to ignore it for the most part but it was getting very bothersome. She knew that short of amputating her own arm there was no way to remove the mark and as much as she hated the sight of it she knew that sacrificing a limb was not going to help her.

"You know you can cover that with a charm right?" Asked Luna

"There's no point." Said Ginny "The world already thinks I'm a Death Eater and my family hates me. This will just serve as a reminder."

"I suppose." Said Luna "So you're going to head to Gringot's now?"

"Why would I go there?" Asked Ginny

"Harry left his trust vault to your family should anything happen to him." Said Luna

"How did you know..." Started Ginny but she felt something leave her mind that she hadn't noticed before "You're a Legilimens!"

"Don't sound so surprised." Said Luna "I am a Ravenclaw after all. Studying magic is what we live for."

"So that's how you always know things that other people don't." Said Ginny "I wasn't going to go to Gringot's but that's a good idea."

"Can I make you a suggestion?" Asked Luna and not waiting for a response before continuing "You should hide in the muggle world for a while. Take some money and shop around Knockturn Alley. Get some things to help you hide your magic from the Ministry and some

books to help you train yourself. Oh and one more thing.” Luna left the room and came back a few minutes later holding a white bundle of cloth that shimmered slightly. “This was my mother’s” Said the Ravenclaw “I don’t have much use for it and sense you’ll need it more I’ll loan it to you.” Luna thrust the Invisibility Cloak into Ginny’s hands.

“I can’t take this Luna.” Said Ginny astonished that her friend trusted her with something that obviously held great value to her.

“You’d better hurry and get out of here.” Said Luna ignoring Ginny’s protests about the cloak. “Daddy will be back soon and he isn’t as enlightened as I am.”

“Thank you Luna.” Said Ginny sincerely “I swear I’ll pay you back one day.”

“Your welcome Ginny.” Said Luna “You’ve always been my friend and I’ll help you in any way I can.”

The two girls hugged one more before Ginny slipped on the cloak and headed for the Burrow which was a few miles away from Luna’s house. There were some things she needed to get before she disappeared and she knew she had to hurry.

When she arrived at the house she found lights on in the kitchen. She slipped into the back door silently and found Bill and Fluer in the sitting room.

“I just can’t believe it.” Said Bill “She really joined You-know-who.” He sighed and turned to his wife with unshed tears in his eyes “She told me how much she hated him after her first year. I would have thought she’d sooner die then join him.”

“Eet iz truly sad William.” Said Fluer comfortingly “Ginny seemed like such a strong willed girl.”

Ginny couldn’t listen anymore and silently made her way up the stairs and into her old room. She went under her bed and pulled up a loose floorboard. Here she had hidden her most valuable things. Photographs, a few galleons, and most importantly a broom with the

word Firebolt written in gold on the handle resided in the magically expanded space. She pulled out the broom and made her way over to her trunk. She was glad that her things hadn't been bothered yet and she quickly packed what few possessions she felt she would need and shrunk her trunk. She was heading to the window when her door suddenly burst open.

"You!" Roared Bill "You have the nerve to show up here? After everything you've done?"

"I'm not going to bother defending myself to you Bill." Said Ginny emotionlessly "I heard what you said downstairs and I know you won't believe me. I will say that you were right and I would sooner die before I joined Voldemort." She frowned as Bill shivered at the name "Stop doing that! It's just a name it can't hurt you, how do you expect to fight him if you can't even say his name!"

"Don't lecture me traitor." Seethed Bill withdrawing his wand "Just come quietly and I won't hurt you."

"Sorry Bill but I have things to do and rotting in Azkaban isn't one of them. She hit him with an Impediment Jinx and climbed onto Harry's Firebolt. She didn't bother opening the window and instead crashed straight through it shattering it on impact. By the time Bill had managed to throw a curse her way she was zooming in the sky off towards Diagon Alley.

...

Voldemort was extremely happy. He had almost everything he needed and now he only had to find a suitable conduit to channel his power through in order to increase his magical energy with Dumbledore's remains. Once this ritual was done he'd be more powerful than even Merlin had been. Once it was done nothing would be able to stop him from taking over the Wizarding World and creating a society of pure blood dictatorship. Muggleborn witches and wizards would not be tolerated and any blood traitors that couldn't be turned would be executed in the worst possible ways to set examples to any who would dare defy him. First he would take Hogwarts and then he would go on to the Ministry. It was the perfect plan and all he

needed was a conduit to replace Potter. It was a shame really as the boy's power would have greatly benefited him. Now though he needed someone else.

"Severus." He called and a moment later Snape appeared before him kneeling and crawling over to kiss his lords robes.

"Yes master?" Asked the Potions Master.

"In your time at Hogwarts who have you seen that could match Potter in a duel?" Asked Voldemort

"There were only a few people." Said Snape "When I spied on his little defense group I found that only the mudblood Granger, The Weasley twins and their sister could hold their own against Potter for more than two minutes."

"Interesting." Said Voldemort "The same Weasley girl who possessed my diary and had now supposedly joined my ranks?"

"That is the one my lord." Said Snape

"Wormtail!" Hissed Voldemort. Again he waited and Wormtail appeared next to Snape repeating the customary greeting by kissing the Dark Lord's robes. "You took too long to respond Wormtail." Said Voldemort making the pudgy man squirm with apprehension of what he knew was to come. "Crucio!" Voldemort enjoyed torturing Wormtail greatly. The sniveling coward always screamed in the most interesting crescendos. He broke the curse and Wormtail panted heavily. "What news do you bring from your position in the Weasley house?"

"Very interesting my lord." Said Wormtail happy that for once he actually had useful information that might not get him tortured. "I found that the boy Ron is not himself. He seems to be possessed by something. The girl called him 'Tom' whatever that means. I know that the boy was the one who killed his parents and brother and that he put the Dark Mark on his sister in order to make her take the blame. He even used her wand to do the deed."

"She called him Tom you say." Said Voldemort genuinely interested
"Go on Wormtail."

"I don't know much else my lord since the house has been mostly empty since the boy killed his parents." Said Petigrew regretfully.

"Very good Wormtail." Said Voldemort "You may go." As Wormtail approached the door Voldemort called after him. "And don't forget that this is the price of failure, Crucio!" He withdrew the curse after only a few seconds but Wormtail still squealed in pain. Snape just watched it with an emotionless mask, but Voldemort knew he was enjoying one of his childhood tormentors suffer. Once Wormtail was gone the Dark Lord turned back to Snape. "I want you and Belatrix to find the Weasley girl. Search everywhere even the Muggle World. I need her found before New Years Eve."

"I shall do my best my lord." Said Snape

"I don't want your best Severus I want results." Hissed Voldemort
"Fail me and this will be the least of your worries, Crucio!"

...

Ginny landed behind the abandoned shop of Ollivander's Wands. She took off the disillusionment on her broom and made sure her cloak was covering her. She headed toward Gringot's which was still open even in the middle of the night and slipped inside. She approached a goblin sitting behind the desk and withdrew her hood. The goblin didn't seem surprised to see a head appear out of nowhere and simply glowered at her. "State your business." He said harshly.

"I need to make a withdrawal and exchange some Galleons for sterling notes." She said in the same harsh tone that the goblin was using.

"Key?" he asked

"Here." She handed him a gold key on a chain.

“Griphook take a passenger to 614!” Yelled the goblin to the cart driver.

Ginny followed the goblin and went on the winding cart ride down to the vault. She had never seen Harry’s vault before and she had only heard from Ron how many galleons it held. Once the doors were open she suppressed a gasp. It was brimming with gold coins stacked as high as she was tall. She opened her money bag and filled it with gold. Once she was done she cast a lightening charm on the bag and repeated the process with a second one.

After that she road the cart back up to the lobby and thanked Griphook for his assistance. The goblin simply nodded not sure how to respond to politeness from a witch. She took one bag to the counter and exchanged the Galleons inside for the Sterling Pound Notes and got a hefty amount of money despite the outrageous transfer fees. Thinking on a whim she asked the goblin. “How would I get Muggle identification papers?”

The goblin looked at her for a moment as if contemplating something then he said “Fifty galleons.”

“What?” Yelled Ginny “Don’t you think that’s a bit high?”

“Sixty.” Said the Goblin

Ginny grudgingly counted out sixty galleons and paid the goblin.

“To get Muggle papers you through Gringot’s you’ll only need about 200 galleons and to tell me the information you want on them.”

Ginny was quickly catching on to how the goblins liked to do business and didn’t comment on the fact that she thought the sixty galleons would get her what she needed. “I’ll pay 250 if you can have them to me within the hour and an extra 50 to keep this between us.”

“Agreed.” Said the goblin and it confirmed Ginny’s suspicion that she was being gypped. Still she decided it was better just to go with it this time.

Soon she had everything she needed she was holding a Muggle identification card, birth certificate and credit card. She was Jennifer Evans a nineteen year old student at a local university in the heart of London. This was sufficient enough for her and she left the bank with her hood drawn and headed for Knockturn Alley. Her first stop was Borgain and Burke's. The bell on the door rang as she entered and a wizened old man came from behind the counter. He looked at the empty air suspiciously and withdrew his wand.

"Show yourself!" He shouted

"I'd rather not." She said "I mean you no harm I just need a few items."

"I don't deal with people who don't show their face." Said Mr. Borgain

"All you need to know is that I have galleons and am not afraid to spend them to get what I want." She said "If it makes you feel better I hereby swear an oath on my magic that I am not a Death Eater, Ministry worker or in any way out to harm your business. I also swear that I have galleons and plan to buy something" She felt a tingling sensation and knew that the oath had been accepted.

"Very well." Said Borgain "What is it you're looking for."

"I know that you carry certain items that the Ministry frowns upon." She informed him. "I want the tracking spells removed from my wand and any books you have on warding and offensive magic."

"Interesting." Mused Borgain "You have something against the Ministry?"

"You could say that." Said Ginny

"Well any enemy of the Ministry can be trusted to a degree in my book." He told her "Follow me." He gestured to the back and Ginny followed him into the back room."

"Accio Cloak!" Shouted Borgain. She barely had time to cast a disillusionment charm on her face before the summoning charm

snatched the cloak away. "Figured you were a woman." Said Borgain "Keep your identity I don't care." He said handing her the cloak back. "I just needed to be sure what I'm dealing with, business after all. I'll ask you to keep that off while your back here. Can't have anything going missing."

"Understood." Said Ginny highly annoyed at the shopkeeper.

"First let's see your wand." He said. When she didn't move he sighed "Fine, I swear on my magic that I will not harm or try to cheat you out of your money." Again she felt a tingling and new his oath was binding. She handed over her wand and he performed the necessary counter measures employed by the ministry to track wand usage. Once it was done he returned her wand and ushered her over to a book shelf. "These are the best books on warding and spells I have. I warn you they are very expensive."

Ginny browsed the book titles and selected one on advanced warding charms and two on magical spells. She had no idea how expensive the books were and she didn't want to overdo it on her spending.

"Ah excellent choices." Said Borgain "The Compendium of Harmful Magic, Accursed Curses and Charms of a Ward Master. That will be fifteen hundred galleons. Including the wand modifications.

Ginny was a bit shocked at such a high price but she knew he wasn't cheating her thanks to the oath and so she signed a bank draft in blood to remove the galleons from Harry's vault. She did feel a little guilty about using Harry's money but a voice in her head was telling her that he would gladly give it to her if he were there and that he had more money than he knew what to do with anyway.

She left the shop after donning her cloak and headed back toward Ollivander's. There were other things she needed, but now she was simply tired. She needed rest after such a long few days and flew out of Diagon Alley and into Muggle London under another disillusionment charm. She dismounted her broom behind the first hotel she saw and gave herself a once over with her wand repairing the tears in her clothes and casting a few cleansing charms. Once she was sure she looked halfway presentable she entered the hotel

and got a room for the night. After dealing with a cranky desk manager she was finally able to lie down on a semi-comfortable bed and get some rest. She didn't know what life had to throw her way next, but she was determined to meet it head on with her head held high.

From the Depths

Harry had been working as a point man for about a month now. The job required him to work with drones that looked like spheres with a bunch of arms and a single eye in the middle of their head. They were equipped with a few defense mechanisms, but it was his job to take care of anything they couldn't handle. He'd come to learn a great deal about fiends and magic during this time. For one thing it was not a good idea to send drones up against large scorpion monsters. Another thing was that Armadados hit extremely hard when you piss them off and finally the most important lesson of them all. Flans can't be killed with a sword. This last lesson came as quite a shock, literally. He had been in one of the deeper runes having the drones try and pick up whatever treasures were found when one of them released a bunch of creatures that looked like wads of living lemon jelly. They had immediately started attacking the drones which had engaged their defensive mechanisms and shot EMP bursts at the beasts. This only seemed to make them bigger. Harry had rushed in swinging his sword and he was surprise when not only did the sword bounce right off but a large amount of electricity was sent through his body. This had caused him a great deal of pain and to rethink his strategy. Wanting to practice with his materia he concentrated on the Freeze spell. It had worked wonders on the flans as they had turned into blocks of frozen jelly. After that it was a simple thrust of the sword and they shattered into pieces.

Now though Harry was learning an even more valuable lesson. He was very deep inside the ruins now and these odd creatures that looked like balls of fire with faces were floating everywhere. The drones were going crazy making all kinds of noises and Harry had no idea what any of them meant. He'd have to ask Genson or Sheyna about it later. The creatures were known as bombs and Harry was about to find out why. He wasted no time in attacking one of the creatures and his sword cut through the living fire easily. Unfortunately this caused the bomb to double in size. Sensing that these monsters were similar to the flans he decided to try some magic. He tapped into his internal magic focusing on a Blizzara spell. He fired the spell and hit another bomb. This seemed to greatly agitate the creature and it grew even larger than the first one. The other bombs in the room all started to grow bigger. There were six of

them in all and they all started to grow. Harry knew something was very, very wrong. He hastily threw up a Shell spell to protect himself from magical damage and waited for what he was certain was to come. There was a resounding BOOM as the bombs exploded with such force that it threw Harry against a wall and almost totally destroyed the drones. Smoke and debris were all over the room there was a gaping hole in the floor. Luckily the bombs hadn't destroyed the major supports of the room so it was relatively superficial damage. However Harry's luck could never be that good and the door he'd used to enter the room with the drones was now impassible. He sighed wondering how he could get out. He was still leery of apparating since other Wizarding magic he'd done had had some 'interesting' side effects. He looked down at the hole in the floor and saw that it connected to a cave. He remembered the stone worm tunnels they'd discovered a week before and figured that this must connect to them in some way. He couldn't help but wonder what these ruins were from in the first place.

"Seth what exactly were you guarding?" He asked the guardian

"I do not know." He responded

"What do you mean you don't know?" Asked Harry

"I was bound to that place as a punishment and was instructed to stay there until I found a worthy junctioner."

"What were you punished for?" Asked Harry

"I was not always a guardian." Explained Seth "I was sentenced to this form because of my crimes in life."

"You were a criminal?" Asked Harry

"I was a victim of my own dreams." Said Seth "I learned the hard way that when someone offers you something that is too good to be true it usually is."

His tone suggested that this was all he was willing to discuss on the topic so Harry didn't push it any further. He looked around for an exit

and only saw the hole again. He didn't want to go through the tunnels, but it seemed like the only way. Sighing in frustration once again he jumped down into the hole and started waling toward what he believed the direction of the other chamber with tunnels was.

"You will need help human." Warned Seth "I am here for a reason, so do not hesitate to summon me."

"Will do." Said Harry. He had yet to summon his GF since he'd had little opportunity. He knew the basics of how it worked. All he had to do was ask Seth to help him and let the guardian do the rest. The problem was that it took a while to summon a guardian the first few times one tried and Harry's recent encounters had warranted immediate action.

As he walked the tunnel sloped further downward, however instead of their being less light there seemed to be a greenish glow emanating from the walls. He hadn't run into any worms yet and this both relieved and unnerved him at the same time. Either he was just not crossing paths with any or there were a group of them in one spot. It turned out that the latter was true, because no sooner had he thought this then he came upon four of the creatures. They sensed him almost immediately and turned toward him their giant maws ready to swallow him whole. He decided that however unpredictable Wizarding magic was in this world, he needed to buy himself some time in order to summon Seth. He raised his right hand and shouted "Impedimenta!" The spell shot in a wide arch and hit all four of the monsters. They were still lunging toward Harry but he simply backed away and concentrated on his GF.

"Seth lend me your power!"

"It shall be done." Responded the guardian and Harry felt himself rooted to the spot he was standing. He could feel a startling power running through his veins and he was aware of something shaped around his body. It was almost like walking through a ghost only not cold and more corporeal. One of the worms managed to shake off the curse and lunged at Harry. He was unable to move and the worm slammed into him. What surprised him was the fact that the presence surrounding him absorbed the blow and the worm slithered back to

try again. Before it could however Harry felt the power within him wanting to burst out. He couldn't contain it any longer nor did he want to. The words came to him instinctively as he shouted.

“Desert's Fury!”

He felt himself shift out of the physical plane and recognized the feeling from when Sophia had summoned Shiva. A whirlpool of sand seemed to come out of nowhere and from within it rose Seth his scythe in hand. The serpent guardian once again donned his armor and hissed in defiance at the worms when he was out of the sand. He started to twirl his scythe around as he had done in the chamber where Harry and the others had battled him. A whirlwind of sand and rock sucked up the worms and twirled them in the air. The laws of physics seemed not to matter as the enclosed tunnel did not seem to contain the whirlwind as it rose thirty feet into the air. Seth wasn't done yet though because once the whirlwind was in the air he flicked his wrist and his scythe went hurtling into the maelstrom. Before it got there the chain linking it shifted and turned into several razor sharp rings and the scythe itself seemed to expand and wrap around itself forming a larger ring that was just as sharp as it's smaller counterparts. Harry watched in morbid fascination and awe as the whirlwind started to spin faster and faster as it descended back to the ground and the rings did their work. The sandstorm had gone from a yellow sandy color to a deep grey color which Harry was almost certain came from the stone worm guts that were no doubt strewn about it. When the wind stopped there wasn't much left of the worms and Seth's scythe reverted back to it's original form and came back to his hand. He bowed to Harry and then disappeared as did the damage to the surroundings.

Harry dropped to his knees feeling slightly exhausted. He wasn't used to that much power running through him all at once and it had taken something out of him. The feeling quickly passed though and he continued on his way down the tunnel. He eventually came to a large opening that lead into an immense cavern. Harry was closer to the top than to the bottom of it and he looked down to see a glowing green pool of some sort of liquid. He assumed that this must be the mako deposit which Sheyna had been talking about. He could hear slight echoes of other creatures' in the cavern and he new that he

was not alone. He called his sword into his hands and made his way cautiously down the winding path which spiraled downward toward the mako. He had wanted to go up but he had seen that the path was too narrow in that direction for him to move along safely. He didn't know what was down the path since there was a green haze obscuring it the closer it got to the mako. He walked for what seemed like ages and miraculously was not bothered by any of the creatures in the cave. As he got closer to the bottom he started to feel a pull toward a particular point below him. He knew it was far away but something inside him had to know what the sensation was leading him to. His luck with encounters ran out when he got into the thicker haze. A large purple beast with a red mane and a huge obsidian horn came out of a side tunnel and blocked his path.

"A Belhemoth." Said Seth

"I don't suppose you'd mind helping me again?" Asked Harry.

"It would take you too long to summon me at your current power level." Said the serpent

"I figured as much." Said Harry. He moved backwards as the creature lunged at him. Despite its immense size the monster was very quick and Harry had to move very quickly to dodge it. He shot it with an Impedimenta but nothing happened as the magic hit the creature and immediately dissipated. The creature lunged at Harry again and instead of dodging he blocked the horn thrust with his sword. He tapped into his enhanced strength which he had augmented using some of the Fira spells he'd collected. It wasn't a huge boost but it was enough to keep him from buckling under the belhemoth's colossal power. The beast sprang backward and before Harry could react it had lunged lower this time and used its horn to ram into the ground at Harry's feet and with a sharp jerk of its head the beast sent Harry hurling into the air and over the side of the path. He landed hard several levels below and was hit shortly afterward with a blast of lightning. The electricity coursed through his body and made him jerk involuntarily. He kept thinking that he couldn't die here because he had to get home and stop Voldemort. He was broken and tired but he would not give up. He felt something within stir and he gripped his sword as tightly as he could. The belhemoth jumped down from its

place higher up and landed a few feet away from the downed wizard. Magic crackled through the air and a blue energy crackled around Harry's downed form. He slowly rose to his feet and the creature made ready to charge him again. It never got the chance though because Harry acted first. The sword of Gryffindor was completely black and seemed to be pulsing with black flames. The same flames surrounded Harry and he held his sword with both hands and dashed toward the creature with speed he didn't know he possessed. He dashed right past the creature and felt his sword cut through bone, skin and muscle. He repeated this three more times and finally leapt into the air and brought his sword down on the creature's skull. The effects of attack took a moment to be noticed, but shortly thereafter it slid apart from the many cuts and all that remained was a bloody pile of body parts. The sword's aura slowly returned to normal and Harry felt his energy draining rapidly. He knew that he had several broken bones and that there was most likely some internal injuries from the strong lightning spell. He fell to the ground face down and breathing heavily. His sword clattered beside him and he felt consciousness slipping away from him.

"NO, human you mustn't collapse here!" Hissed Seth. "Being so close to exposed mako will kill you!"

Harry was startled by this statement and forced his broken body to react once again. He used all his remaining energy and concentrated on his spells which resided within him. He felt the healing spells Sophia had given him and willed them to act on himself. He felt a comforting warmth as the spells healed his cuts and bruises and mended his bones. After one use he wasn't fully restored but it was enough to allow him to stand shakily. He concentrated again and willed another burst of energy to heal him. This time he was almost completely restored aside from his right shoulder which had been the worst injury of them all. He realized that forcing it to heal would probably do more damage than good and resigned to let Claire look at it later.

The pull he had felt returned and it seemed much closer this time. He continued along his path until it stopped sloping and leveled out about twenty feet above the pool of shimmering green liquid. He saw a spot in the air that was shimmering with white and purple energy and felt

the intense need to draw magic from it. He realized that this is what must have been calling to him and focused on it. What he felt contained within made his blood run cold. It was so powerful and he felt that all this magic would bring was death and destruction. He'd felt nothing like this before and tried to stop himself from drawing any of it into himself. It was too late however and he felt the incredible magic etch out a place within him for itself. He tapped the draw point dry and felt a great pain within his head from taking in such a powerful spell. It felt like it was burning his very being and it most likely would have had Seth not acted.

The guardian knew exactly what spell its current junctioner had drawn and he knew that if it was not junctioned properly it would eat the young wizard from the inside out. It split the spell up and distributed the pieces evenly throughout the areas of the boy's magical core that would augment his abilities. Harry's endurance, magical strength and defense, strength, spirit and stamina were all increased by the power of the spell. The wizard opened his eyes which were now held a slight glow which they lacked before. He felt invigorated and as if he could take on the world. It was almost like the feeling of Felix Faleaces. He briefly wondered where this feeling had come from. One moment he'd been feeling as if he was about to be cooked from within and the next he felt totally different. It was then that he felt the powerful magic residing within him. He saw that it had been reorganized in order to prevent an overload of his magical core.

"Did you do this Seth?" He asked

"If I had not you would have died." Said the guardian

"That's three times I owe you in one day." Said Harry "What was that spell anyway?"

"You drew a massive quantity of Ultima." Informed Seth "It is the most powerful spell known to most humans. Even though you have drawn it I doubt you would be able to cast it successfully and attempting to do so would most likely destroy you in the process."

“Can’t I just get rid of it?” Asked Harry not wanting something that felt like it was made of a thousand Killing Curses inside his magic, even if it was boosting him.

“Normally yes, but in your case no.” Said Seth “If you checked on your quantity of magic more you would know that over the last month every spell you’ve drawn has multiplied. Didn’t it ever occur to you to wonder why you had more spells than what you drew?”

“Not really.” Said Harry “I just figured I was miscounting the number I had.”

“That is not possible.” Said Seth “The magic becomes a part of you and you will always know how much you take in and where it is within your core.”

“So why does that mean I can’t get rid of it?” Asked Harry

“Your core is different from what most people have.” Said Seth “Your wizard magic is musing with the magic you take in and making more of it. In order to forcibly remove the spells you would need to release a part of your own magic. To release the Ultima you would have to sacrifice so much of your own magic that it would leave you unable to perform even a simple fire spell.”

“What would happen if I just cast it until I didn’t have anymore?” Asked Harry

“That would deplete even the base magic and you would no longer have to worry about having the spell within you.” Said Seth “You will need to be much more proficient in this world’s magic and controlling your own power before you try and use Ultima.”

“Yes I get it, if I try to use it now I’ll die.” Said Harry

“The spell is not evil.” Said Seth “Much good has been done with it in the pass. Magic is neither good nor evil only the intent behind it.”

“What about that curse I put you under during our battle?” Challenged Harry “Surely you can’t tell me that it’s not evil.”

"The curse merely causes pain." Said Seth "Pain is not evil it is simply a part of life. You also did not cast the spell simply to hurt me but to protect those fighting with you as well as yourself. If you hadn't used it I would have probably killed you all."

"Don't be so sure." Said Harry

"I am inside your mind boy." Said Seth sounding slightly offended "I probably understand it better than you do. You should really practice that Occlumency that you've been neglecting since you've come here. It would allow you to channel magic faster and help you with all those stray thoughts that pass through your mind. Your link with Voldemort is also being tampered with but I am not sure what you can do about that."

"Do you know why its not working the same?" Asked Harry "Not that I miss watching him torture people or anything, but it is concerning me that I only get his emotions now and don't know why he's happy or angry."

"I can hazard a guess." Said Seth "I can see your memories and I know what happened to your friend. The fact that there are in essence two Tom Riddle's is messing with your connection, the fact that you are no longer on your world is also a probable cause. Time runs differently in your world then it does here."

"What do you mean?" Asked Harry "I thought time was absolute no matter where you are."

"Not true." Said Seth "Time is relevant. It flows according to how it is perceived to flow. Your world sees it one way and this one another therefore it flows differently here."

"So I could be here for years and only a few days could go by in my world?" Asked Harry

"Theoretically." Said Seth "Although I do not think the difference is quite that drastic."

“You’ve given me a lot to think about Seth.” Said Harry “I think we’d better head back up now.”

Harry looked around and saw a cave that started to slope upward and headed along the tunnel. The trek was mostly uneventful aside from an encounter with a rouge stone worm or two. With Ultima enhancing his strength he had no problem dispatching the worms. He finally found himself in the room he’d discovered with Bastian and the others where the group of worms had found them. He headed out of the ruins and was immediately spotted.

“What the hell happened to you?” Asked a livid Sheyna “Do you realize that you’ve been missing for eight hours? We thought you were dead when we got the feed from the drones and saw the bombs go off.”

“Nice to see you too.” Said Harry sarcastically “I suppose I shouldn’t tell you about the mako deposit I found or the Belhemoth that almost eviscerated me.”

Sheyna looked happy at the mention of the mako but paled slightly at the mention of the Belhemoth. “You fought a Belhemoth by yourself and won?”

“Barely.” Said Harry speaking of which I need to get to the infirmary because I think my shoulder is about to fall off.”

Sheyna simply nodded still shocked about the mention of such a powerful fiend and the fact that the young man in front of her had somehow managed to kill it by himself. She knew he wasn’t lying because there was no way he’d know what one was unless he’d seen it and if you were close enough to see a Belhemoth it was close enough to see you.

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“What have you done to yourself this time Harry?” Asked Claire “Ever since you started this job you’ve been in here at least twice a week.”

“I had a little accident and hurt my shoulder.” Said Harry

“Are you sure that’s it, because you look a little green.” Said Claire

“That’s probably just some left over mako.” Said Harry nonchalantly

“What?” Asked the medic “If you’re green from mako exposure you’ve got mako poisoning!”

“So that’s bad?” Asked Harry

“It’s definitely not a good thing.” She told him “If you get too much mako in your system it can cause your organs to mutate and malfunction if not given the proper counter agent.”

“Then no it’s not good.” Said Harry “Please tell me you have some counter agent?”

“I’m sorry but I don’t.” Said Claire “They’d have some back in the city though.”

“So can’t I just go to the city?” He asked

“You could but healthcare is pretty expensive on this island and they still might not have it there. The best place to go is to the mainland. Lucca would definitely carry it at any medical facility.

“How long do I have before it starts to effect me?” Asked Harry concerned

“I’ll need a blood sample and I’ll be able to tell you.” Said Claire “In the mean time let’s get your shoulder fixed up. Then I’ll need to tell the captain about what happened.”

“She already knows.” Said Sheyna coming into the room “You know you cause a lot of trouble Harry. It’s a good thing for you we were already going to Lucca anyway, otherwise I might have been forced to leave you like this.”

“I appreciate your concern.” Said Harry sarcastically “It warms my heart to know that I am so deeply cared for.”

"I did say 'might' smart ass." Said Sheyna "You do have your uses though so it would be a waste to let you die."

"So I'm a tool now?" He asked in mock outrage

"Pretty much." Said Sheyna "We'll head back into town tomorrow and get the next boat to the mainland. Dad can manage here without us and thanks to you we've already gathered the bulk of the gold and weapons that were in the ruins. I'll tell him about the mako deposit and he can start working on that, this place was a really great find."

"Okay Harry." Said Claire returning with the blood test results "By my calculations you've got about two months maybe three with that level of mako before you start to experience any long term side effects."

"What about short term?" Asked Harry

"Well..." Said Claire "You'll have a slight glow in your eyes and you may experience some pain every so often, but other than that you'll be slightly more alert and possibly a little physically stronger."

"I thought you said it was poison?" Asked a confused Harry "How can it have positive side effects if it's a poison."

"It's not a poison it's just toxic in it's pure form without the counter agent. There are stories about an army from the Gaea continent before the worlds started merging. They say that they used pure mako to amplify their soldiers' performance. They had a way to counterbalance the effects and their army almost took over their world."

"I wonder how they were stopped if they had an army of super soldiers." Said Harry

"The story doesn't say." Said Claire "But that is an interesting question."

"Does it really matter?" Asked Sheyna "It happened a long time ago and it hasn't even been proven. I mean some of the stories I've heard

about alien life forms coming to that planet and possessing guys with big swords just sounds ridiculous.”

“Yes some of the tales are a bit farfetched.” Said Claire “I don’t believe theirs a summon materia that can summon thirteen eidolons to do the casters bidding.”

“That might actually be true.” Said Sheyna “That materia has never been found but it is supposed to exist.”

“You know stories like those usually have elements of truth to them.” Mused Harry “If that’s what the people on that continent say happened on their world than it probably did, that or something close to it.”

“Come on Harry an Army of super soldiers?” Asked Sheyna incredulously “If they were so strong how come they aren’t still around?”

“They were probably victims of their own arrogance.” Said Harry “People that have power are usually conceited if they have it too long. My guess is that this army thought they could take the world and most likely underestimated someone who opposed them.”

“So you’re a philosopher now?” Asked Sheyna condescendingly

“I’m just telling you some words of wisdom that someone once told me.” Said Harry

“I see.” Said Sheyna “Well you sound like some crazy old man.”

Harry simply laughed at her and the two women looked at him oddly. “If she only knew.” Thought Harry.

...

It took some convincing on the part of Sheyna to get Genson to allow them to leave. He didn’t believe Harry had mako poisoning and Claire had to do a second blood test and show him the results in order for him to agree. Once he saw that Harry really DID have mako

poisoning he was oddly happy for some reason. Sheyna said it was because now he had proof that a mako deposit was in the ruins and that he could start a materia mine there. Harry on the other hand was sure that Genson was happy if anything life threatening happened to his daughter's alleged boyfriend whom he 'did not find worthy of her.' They took a dune buggy from the rig's hanger and headed toward the shore of the island where the city was located. Harry was glad to finally be leaving the desert. He really did not like slaving in the hot suns for twelve hours a day with hardly any reprieve. Sheyna was happy that she didn't have to manage her father's excavations anymore, although the money was good she missed her home town of Bevelle and was anxious to get back home and see her mother again.

It took them about two hours to get back to the city and Harry got his first look at actual civilization in this new world. The buildings were built in a dome shape and there were several stalls in the streets with people selling all kinds of things. He could see the docks which held large fraters which seemed to be steam powered and he saw one thing that looked oddly out of place on the small dock. It was a huge building which seemed to somehow float in the water even though it looked as though it should sink to the bottom. It was vaguely round in build but it had several protrusions that stuck out at odd angles and a large tower seemed to come out of the middle of it. In the center of the tower was what Harry supposed was the logo of whoever owned the huge building. It was a yin-yang symbol which looked to be surrounded by golden fire. Under the yin-yang symbol was a black shape that Harry recognized as a depiction of a roaring lion's head.

"What the bloody hell is that?" Asked Harry in awe

"That is Bessaid Garden." Said Sheyna "One of the many mobile fortresses of SeeD. My question is what are they doing here?"

"Didn't Bastian say that this place was a docking point for SeeD?" Asked Harry

"It is but they don't dock unless they need repair or their deploying someone." Said Sheyna "Since it looks like the thing is in one piece I'd say that they're about to deploy SeeDs to this area."

"I wonder how it stays on the water like that." Thought Harry

"It is not that impressive." Said Seth with a tone that Harry couldn't place "It is just a ring that allows it to hover, really if you wanted to bring one down all you would have to do is knock out part of the hover ring."

"And how would you know?" Asked Harry

"My past." Answered the guardian cryptically

"Whatever." Said Harry

"Come on Harry you don't need to stick around here." Said Sheyna "If a SeeD saw you they'd know you had junctions and then you'd be in for trouble."

"So where are we going?" Asked the wizard

"For now we'll go to my place and then I'll see when the next ship leaves." Said Sheyna They drove on for another half an hour and Harry saw more of the seaside city. It was rally a sight to behold. Unlike the architecture of his own world this one's wasn't completely dependant on right angles and squares. It was more structured around domes and cylindrical structures. There were a few sky scrapers but the majority of the buildings were small to large domes. They pulled up to a dome that was red with yellow borders around the windows. It made Harry's heart pang in longing to see the Gryffindor common room again with it's similar colors to the dome. To get into the house it required one to use a hand panel on the side of the door. Harry was impressed with the level of technology available to regular people in this world. It made him wonder what Eshar was like if it was supposed to be the most technologically advanced place on the globe.

The inside of the house looked like a normal muggle house to Harry. There was a couch and some chairs in the living room along with what appeared to be a television. The kitchen wasn't large like the one at Privet Drive or the Burrow, it was small with enough room for no more than two people to move around in at once. It had all the

normal appliances which Harry was used to seeing in a kitchen and he felt slightly relieved that at least things weren't THAT different in this world.

"Your welcome to the couch and whatever foods in the fridge, although I don't think that's much." Said Sheyna "I haven't been home in a while and I'm hardly ever here so I usually just eat out."

"Thanks." Said Harry heading over to the couch. He tapped set his shrunken trunk on in front of the coffee table and tapped it with his right index finger to make it bigger. He sifted through his things again and his eyes came to rest on his photo album. He took it out and started looking at the pictures of his parents. As he turned the pages he started seeing less and less photos of his parents and more of him and his friends. He saw the picture of his eleven year old self at the end of his first year with a bandage wrapped around his head waving back at him. Those were simpler times. All he had to worry about was completing his homework, get through exams and save pretty stones from possessed teachers. It only got more complicated from there. Horcruxes started appearing, traitors were exposed and dark lords started using people as unwilling instruments for their own resurrections. He turned a few more pages and saw a recent photo. It was taken at Bill and Fleur's wedding. It had him standing beside Ron who had an arm around Hermione who stood next to Ginny. The photo Harry kept stealing glances at the red head who was doing her best to look happy although it could be seen in her eyes that she clearly wasn't. Every time the photo Harry would look another direction the Ginny would shoot him an angry glare. This whole time Ron and Hermione were either arguing or looking deeply into each others eyes.

"How do they move?" Asked Sheyna startling Harry

"Magic." He said simply

"Fine if you don't want to tell me." She said slightly frustrated.

"I'm serious." Said Harry "The film is charmed when it's developed to make the photos move according to how the people were feeling when the picture was taken."

“So what did you do to make that girl so mad at you?” Asked Sheyna

Harry’s mood immediately darkened at this “I tried to protect her.” He said sadly “I don’t think I did a very good job of that though.” He closed the photograph album and stowed it back in his trunk. “So when are you going to the docks?”

Seeing right through the subject change, but deciding to ignore it Sheyna answered him “I was thinking about heading back out there now. I don’t have any junctions so SeeD should have no reason to bother me.”

“Let me come.” Said Harry

“If they see you...” Sheyna started but he cut her off.

“They won’t.” He said turning invisible.

Sheyna gasped when she saw him vanish in front of her eyes. “So that’s how you got past the guards that day.” She said thoughtfully then her eyes narrowed “Where else have you gone using that trick?”

Harry didn’t miss the innuendo in that statement and decided to clear it up right away. “I haven’t used it for any ‘unwholesome activities’ if that’s what you mean.” He assured her “I do have some morals you know.”

“I was only kidding Harry.” Said Sheyna “Lighten up. If you want to come than sure but you’re gong to have to stay like that.”

“That’s what I’d planned on doing.” He told her. “Shall we get going then?”

“If you’re in that much of a hurry then let’s go.”

They decided on Walking since Sheyna wanted to enjoy the smell of the sea. It reminded her of her home and she told Harry about Bevelle while they walked. She got odd looks because to everyone else it seemed like she was talking to thin air. Harry decided to try

and cast a notice-me-not charm on her and the spell caused his hand to sting. All his spells did that in this world but it was slowly becoming less and less. The stronger the spell the worse the feeling. When he'd cast the Cruciatus he'd been so caught up that he hadn't felt the pain although he had been aware of his bones cracking when he'd cast the curse. He had yet to try something that powerful again but he was slowly working his way back up to it.

"I like this part of the island. It's completely different from the middle part. There's actually life here. The other part is just a huge sand pit, but you already knew that didn't you. It reminds me of Bevelle, my hometown. I grew up there with mom and dad and it was fine before dad got the idea to start a company using some inheritance money he got."

"This is only my third time seeing an ocean." Said Harry "The first time I saw one was when I was eleven and it was under different circumstances."

"And the second?" Asked Sheyna

"I'd rather not think about that memory." Said Harry sorrowfully "Bad things happened that night."

"I see." Said Sheyna "Do you have any good memories from your world?" She had asked the question as a joke but he answered her very seriously.

"I told you before that my life isn't a very desirable one." He said "I only have a few good memories in my life and unfortunately most of them link to the bad. That's why I've enjoyed being here as much as I have. I don't have to worry about being everyone's hero and people watching my every move. I can finally be me without having to worry about whatever I do showing up in the next morning's paper for everyone to judge. I don't have to worry about a homicidal dark lord who's number one goal is to kill me. Here I can finally breathe. But for me it can't be that simple. I am my world's hero whether I want to be or not and I am going to have to face that dark lord eventually anyway. I don't know how it will happen now that I don't know how to get back home, but I'm sure it will one way or another."

“Things will get better Harry.” Sheyna assured him “To be able to see the darkness there has to be at least a shimmer of light.”

“Now whose the philosopher?” Teased Harry

“Hey you’re not the only one to ever hear ‘words of wisdom’ as you put it.” Said Sheyna

They continued in silence for a while and they finally reached the docks again. The garden was still there and this time there were several people in dark blue uniforms which bore the SeeD crest over their hearts standing around the docks. Many of them had odd weapons that looked like swords but instead of a hilt there was what looked to Harry like the handle of a muggle gun.

“What are those sword things they have?” Whispered Harry

“Gunblades.” Said Sheyna “Only SeeDs carry those. The trigger adds more power to the thrust of the blade if it’s pulled at the right time. I’m told it takes a lot of training to be proficient with one of those.”

“Years” Hissed Seth

“Huh?” Asked Harry mentally, but he got no response.

Sheyna started walking toward the ship charter office and Harry was about to follow when a group of people walked past blocking her from view. By the time they were gone she was already lost in the sea of people. Harry wasn’t too worried since he’d memorized the way back to her house and was confident he could get there. He decided to have a look around and headed toward the garden to look at it more closely. He slipped past the three SeeDs who were guarding the entrance to the building’s dock and drifted toward two figures who seemed to be having a private conversation. He knew it was wrong to eavesdrop, but he was the son of a Marauder and simple rules like that were meant to be broken in his book. As he got closer he could make out that one of the figures was a young woman about his age with blonde hair and olive green eyes. The other figure was a tall

black man also about his age with long hair which was pulled into a single braid going down his back.

“So how long are you going to be out Andrea?” Asked the man

“I’m not sure.” She said “After everything that’s been going on the last couple of years and with Black Wing activity on the rise it’s hard to say.” Said Andrea “Are you going to be alright cooped up in the garden all by your lonesome?”

“I should be fine.” Said the man “Although I miss having Dream and Leonheart to train with. I just can’t believe they were traitors.”

“Leonheart was definitely unexpected.” Said Andrea “But I never did trust Dream.”

“You were best friends with the guy!” Said the man incredulously

“So were you.” Said Andrea

“Shove it Pryde.” Said the man

“Not unless you do it first Bates.” Said Andrea

“How do you think they got by Balamb’s security?” Asked Bates

“I have no idea.” Said Andrea “However they did it they managed to get by without a trace until it was too late to catch Leonheart.”

“I wonder what he’s going to do with Griever.” Said Bates “That’s the most powerful GF in the world by junctioning standards.”

“Whatever it is it can’t be good.” Said Andrea “I think he may have joined the Black Wings myself.”

“If they had Griever that would be a very bad thing.” Said Bates “And Antym is like the best gunblader since The Lion.”

“Well he is descended from him.” Said Andrea “It would make sense that he was good with a gunblade.”

"Is it true that he has the-..." Harry lost the rest of what Bates was saying because someone ran into him and caused him to stumble.

"What the hell?" Yelled whoever bumped into him. He turned around to see a young man with red hair that was up in straight spikes with brown eyes looking around furiously. The other two SeeDs acted instantly and started firing Dispels everywhere. One of the spells hit Harry and caused him to shimmer into existence for a moment before fading back into complete invisibility. This was enough for the SeeDs though because they had instantly surrounded his area. One of them shot a water spell at him and they were easily able to pinpoint his position. A gunblade whizzed through the air in his direction and his sword was in his hands in an instant. The blades collided with an almighty clang which attracted the attention of the other nearby SeeDs. Andrea swung her gunblade at Harry again and again he blocked the blow with his own blade. This time though the trigger on the gunblade was engaged and the force of the blow almost caused Harry to drop his sword. Knowing when he was outmatched Harry decided to try and escape. He called forth a Tornado spell from his stocked magic and the spell caught the SeeDs off guard. While the powerful winds tossed them about Harry ran with all he was worth back in the direction of Sheyna's house. "That was too close." He thought

"You need to work on your sword skills." Said Seth "Do you realize that while I am junctioned to you I share your fate? If you die I die so I'd rather appreciate it if you'd try a little harder to stay alive."

"I'm doing the best I can." Said Harry

"Well do better." Said Seth

"I'll try." Said Harry

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Harry met back up with Sheyna as she was leaving the docks and it seemed she hadn't even noticed his absence. This was understandable since she couldn't actually see his position anyway.

“So when do we leave?” He asked

“Weren’t you there when I got the tickets?” She asked

“I got separated from you when we reached the docks.” He told her
“I’ve been waiting here the whole time.”

“Well I’m glad you didn’t get into any trouble.” Said Sheyna “There was some commotion over by the garden and I was afraid you might have been involved since I wasn’t sure weather you were still with me or not.”

“Umm.” Said Harry intelligently

Sheyna sighed “Well at least you got away.” She said exasperatedly
“They didn’t see you did they?”

“I think they just caught a shimmer.” Said Harry “Dispel has an interesting effect on my invisibility.”

“Let’s hope you didn’t completely blow your cover then.” Said Sheyna
“Please try to be more careful from now on.” She said pleadingly

“I’ll try.” He said “Although most of the time trouble finds me.”

A/N: I would just ask one thing of the readers, review! I only got like one review for the last chapter even though it had almost 300 hits I don't get it if there are so many poeple reading it how come only one decided to at least comment on the fic? Say something about it, I don't mind constructive criticism, hell I'll even take a few flames just say SOMETHING.

Voyage to the Mainland

That night Harry experienced his first bouts of pain from the mako poisoning. It was like a throbbing ache all over his body and it made sleep that night near impossible. It was nowhere near as bad as the Cruciatus, but it made life difficult. The next morning found Harry and Sheyna getting ready to meet Genson who had prepared the items which they'd be delivering. They no longer needed their customary work uniforms so Harry opted for a comfortable pair of black track pants and a black T-shirt with his trainers. Sheyna looked a lot different out her sand colored overalls, she wore a light blue T-shirt with blue jeans and a denim jacket. Around her waist she wore a gun belt and she had a side sheath for her katana. They went to the rig sponsor agency and found the desert tycoon waiting for them.

"You look like shit boy." Said the man bluntly. Harry looked extremely tired and his eyes had dark circles under them. The colorful tan he'd acquired while in the desert had lessened considerably and the greenish tinge to his skin made him look a sight.

"That's enough dad." Said Sheyna "Is the truck all loaded up with the parcels?"

"Everything's ready to go." Said Genson. He rummaged in a drawer in the desk and came out holding two bags which looked quite heavy with whatever was in them. "I suppose you want your pay before you go?" He tossed them the bags and Harry was surprised at how much his weighed.

"That's 12,000 Gil plus your percentage commission, you did good work kid." Said Genson

"How much was the overall commission worth?" Asked Sheyna

"Well there was a lot of gold in those ruins and total it was worth about 5,000,000 gil." So that makes about another 16,000 for all the crewman who were on that rig."

"What about weapons?" Asked Harry

“Those that were in working condition I decided to give to that Dream kid.” Said Genson “I don’t need ‘em and he seemed more interested in weapons than money anyway.”

“So I assume we’ll be using the armored truck?” Asked Sheyna “2,500,000 Gil is a lot of money to be trucking across the continent.”

“Don’t worry about nobody stealing it.” Said Genson. “The truck is outfitted with double adamantium alloy and it takes your fingerprint to open Sheyna, plus you’ve got the kid here with you and you’re not too shabby when it comes to a fight yourself. Besides no one else knows that we found such a huge haul so it’s doubtful you’ll meet any obstacles between here and Lucca.”

“I hope you’re right dad.” Said Sheyna “Well let’s go then.”

As they were heading out Genson called after them “I know you don’t plan on coming back here Sheyna.” He said making her stop in her tracks “Just stay away from Bevelle.”

“What?” She asked incredulously “How can you tell me to do that?”

“Don’t blame me.” He said defensively “It was your mother’s idea to get you away from the city in the first place, I’m just following the wife’s orders.”

“Bye dad.” Said Sheyna

“Boy!” Called Genson “If anything happens to my daughter I’m holding YOU responsible.”

Harry swallowed at this but turned around to face Genson “I won’t let anything happen to her sir.”

“Will you two stop it.” Said Sheyna “I am not a little girl who needs protecting.”

“You’ll always be my little girl.” Said Genson “I just wish you’d reconsider leaving.”

"Bye dad." Said Sheyna again this time leaving the building. Harry quickly followed after her and they made their way around to where a large vehicle with a huge trailer was parked. Sheyna walked over to the back of the trailer and put her hand on the pad that released the lock. It slowly opened and Harry was reminded of his vault at Gringot's. "I wonder if my will went into effect when I left." He thought "Hopefully the money can help someone, the Weasleys need it more than I do anyway."

Inside the trailer there were several metal cases stacked along the wall which Harry assumed held money or weapons. Each one had a fingerprint reactive lock like the truck and they seemed to be made of adamantium as well. "I hope Bastian appreciates this." Said Sheyna "It's going to take us a week to get from here to Lucca."

"We have to be on a ship for a week?" Asked Harry

"More or less." Said Sheyna "I just hope we don't run into any sea fiends."

"There are monsters in the ocean too?" Asked Harry "For some reason I'm not that surprised."

"Don't they have fiends where your from?" She asked

"Not exactly." Said Harry "We have some pretty dangerous creatures but nothing like what I've seen here, well the Belhemoth reminded me of a dragon I had to get past once."

"Why did you need to get past a dragon?" Asked Sheyna as they were climbing into the cab of the truck.

"A tournament I was forced to enter." Said Harry "You had to get past a dragon and take an egg it was guarding."

"But Dragon's kill for their eggs." Said Sheyna

"I know." Said Harry "My Firebolt almost got burnt to a crisp trying to get around it."

"Firebolt?" She asked confused as she started the engine. The truck was remarkably silent for it's size and Harry wondered what the engine was made of since trucks like this on his world were far noisier.

"It was my broom." Said Harry

"And what good is a broom against a dragon?" Asked Sheyna skeptically "Were you going to sweep it's droppings into it's face or something?"

"Not that kind of broom." Said Harry "This kind flies and you ride it."

"That sounds interesting." Said Sheyna "Do you have it with you?"

"No I left it with my girl-...this girl I knew." He said carefully

"So you left it with your girlfriend." Said Sheyna

"Well yeah...I mean she wasn't when I left...I mean it's complicated." Said Harry.

"Either she was you girlfriend or she wasn't." Said Sheyna "Oh wait I get it, it was that red headed girl. That's why she was so pissed at you because you broke up with her in some stupidly noble bid to protect her."

"How...what?" Sputtered Harry that was the same thing Hermione had said to him several times about how stupid his reasoning was. "Whatever, it's not like it matters now."

"Did you love her?" Asked Sheyna as she drove toward the dock.

"I don't know." Said Harry "I don't really know what it's like to love people so I can only guess and say that I did."

"You say it like you'll never see her again." Said Sheyna

"I might not." Said Harry "Things weren't too good in my world when I left and her family was already in the middle of the war, plus I found out time is different in this world. I could be here for years and only a

few months could have gone by in my world. If she did manage to survive that long we both would have probably changed so much by then that a relationship could be impossible. “

“You’re so depressing Harry.” Said Sheyna “We really need to find you some way to work out that negativity of yours.”

“It’s hard to remain positive when everything in your life is a negative.” Said Harry

“Can you do anything about it right now?” Asked Sheyna “Didn’t you say that you could finally breathe in this world? Wouldn’t the people you care about want you to at least try to relax since there was really nothing you could do in the first place?”

“It’s not that simple.” Harry argued “I can’t just ignore the fact that everyone I care about is in the middle of a war while I’m stuck somewhere that doesn’t have nearly as much going on.”

“I wouldn’t be too sure about that last one.” Said Sheyna “Spira isn’t exactly the most peaceful of places right now. We’re a neutral territory between two warring countries. Not to mention the fiends that roam around between the cities add to that a few crazy sorceresses and you’ve got yourself a real peaceful place.”

“Sorceresses?” Asked Harry “Are they like witches?”

“Well they make what I’ve seen you do look normal.” Said Sheyna “I think there are three of them right now but I could be wrong. That’s what SeeD was made for according to Bastian. They usually just act as a peace keeping force, but should a sorceress decide that she wants to take over the world, that becomes SeeD’s major goal.”

“So why not just let them know I’m here so they can find a way for me to get back home?” Asked Harry “They seem like they’d be the best people to handle a case like mine.”

“You’d think so.” Said Sheyna “But someone like you would really add to their organization. They may say they would work on a way to get you home, but then you’d be working for them in return for their

helping you. They'd basically study the way you use magic and try to find a way to duplicate it. They'd also want to make sure that you didn't become like a sorceress and try to conquer the world. Another thing is that if they sent you home there'd be no guarantee that you wouldn't come back with an army of people like yourself to take over."

"But that's just paranoid." Said Harry

"It makes sense though." Said Sheyna "I said sorceresses make your magic look normal, but not everyone can take down a behemoth on their own and come out of it with only a broken shoulder."

"I was actually in worse shape then that." Said Harry "I thought I was going to die and then I suddenly had this overwhelming urge to survive and then there was this power and I did this weird thing with my sword."

"Sounds like you had a Limit Break." Said Sheyna "They happen when you're in positions like that. I've done it a few times although it takes a lot out of you and they don't always win a fight."

"Is there any way to control it?" Asked Harry

"There are the Hyper drugs but those are illegal and the Aura spell but those are really hard to come by."

"Why are the drugs illegal?" Asked Harry

"They make you feel angry most of the time and your coordination is off." She told him "A good thing about Hypers though is that they counteract tranquilizers."

"That's good to know." Said Harry "I guess I'll think about what you said. I won't promise I'll be a bag of sunshine but I'll try."

"I'm not saying ignore your feelings about home." She clarified "I'm just saying not to let them drag you down." She pulled the truck into the boat's cargo bay and they hopped out. Sheyna went to the back of the trailer and reinforced the security on it by using a keypad by the

palm reader. There were a series of clicking sounds and the light on the palm reader went from green to red.

"Now if even I put my hand on there it won't open unless someone puts in the code." She said "That way even if I'm forced to put my hand there it won't open unless I put in the clearance code."

"That's good I guess." Said Harry "So what we just leave it in here?"

"Hell no." She said incredulously "We take eight hour shifts guarding it. So two shifts per day for each of us."

"Thirty-two hour days are weird." Said Harry

"You'll get used to it eventually." She assured him

"So who gets the first watch?" He asked

"You go and rest." She told him "I know you didn't sleep much last night and I can't have you nodding off during guard duty."

"Why didn't your dad send more people with us?" He asked "This is a pretty big cargo load, I would have thought a few more people would have made the job easier."

"No one else was available really." Said Sheyna "We didn't really expect to find something that would need a lot of security to guard, plus the more people that knew what we were guarding the more likely of a breach. No one knows what's in here and the force needed to break the armor on the truck would deter most people anyway. They might go through a lot of work only to let out a really strong fiend so most people that could do it won't bother."

"And if someone does try?" Asked Harry

"Use whatever means necessary to make sure they don't get inside." She told him

"I understand." Said Harry he let out a large yawn. "Where do I go to rest then?"

"You're in room 84." She told him "There are a hundred cabins so just look for yours." The isn't but so big so I'm sure you can find it."

"Yeah I'll do that." Said Harry "See you in a few hours then."

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Harry headed up to the deck of the ship in order to get some air. He'd managed to catch a few hours sleep and it was now an hour before his guard shift started. He took the time to look at the ocean and watch the first sun set while the second one rose. This cast an orange haze over everything and the sky was a mixture of pink and yellow. There was a steady sea breeze going and the cool air helped Harry relax. He took a deep breath and just appreciated the alien beauty of the scene before him. He suddenly realized that he wasn't alone on the deck. There were a few people standing in a group a ways down at the stern of the ship and there were a few more people scattered here and there, what really caught his attention was a solitary figure standing near the bow leaning on the rail of the ship. It was the SeeD he'd seen the day before only this time she wasn't in the standard issue garden uniform. Instead she donned a brown leather jacket over a white T-shirt and black jeans with a belt witch her gunblade was sheathed in. He immediately stiffened when he saw her. He still wasn't sure if he'd actually been seen or just spotted. He knew that his sword had been visible since he hadn't been holding it when he turned, so he was sure she'd at least recognize that if she saw it again as it was rather unique. He made a mental note to watch out for her. He decided to head for his shift early and tell Sheyna about her as she might be able to shed some insight as to why SeeD would be present on a common ferry. He found her sitting atop the truck looking very board.

"You're here early." She commented

"There's a SeeD on the ship." He informed her.

"I was afraid of that." She said "Was there just one or a whole group?" She asked

"I only recognized one and she wasn't in uniform." Said Harry "So there could be more."

"Well just avoid her and try not to be too conspicuous." Said Sheyna "We don't want you to get yourself caught. How's the mako pain?"

"I don't really feel it right now but I have had a few pangs the last few hours." He told her.

"That should stop once we get you to Lucca and you get the counteragent." She assured him

"I can't wait." He said dryly "In the meantime it's not really that bad."

"Not now no." Said Sheyna "But the longer it stays in your system the worse it'll get."

"How encouraging." He drawled

"Hey what did I tell you earlier?" She said warningly

"Well when you talk about something negative what do you expect me to do?" He shot back

"Point taken." Said Sheyna "I think I'll head up to my cabin now. This job is too quiet."

"Isn't that a good thing?" Asked Harry

"Suppose your right." She said "I just hate doing nothing all day."

"It can't be that bad." He said disbelievingly

"You'll see." She said and headed out of the cargo area.

Harry leaned against the back of the trailer and settled himself in for his shift.

...

The next three days were spent in much the same way. They would alternate shifts every eight hours and fit in sleep and trips to the loo and galley in between. This all changed on the night of the fourth day during Harry's guard shift. He always had the later part of the night from 0:00 to 8:00 a.m. The night started like any other. He awoke from a semi-fitful sleep and headed to the galleys for a bite to eat before his meal. He then made his way down to the cargo hold and relieved Sheyna. He once again settled in for eight hours of silence and solitude.

The silence and solitude was broken an hour or so later when he heard a slight whizzing sound above his head. Something told him to move and it was a good thing he listened to it because as soon as he dived to the side a metal panel from the ceiling came crashing down onto the spot where he'd been standing. From the hole in the ceiling five figures all dressed in black body suits and wearing black body armor. Each carried an odd spear like weapon that had two prongs at the end and some sort of orb set between them. They all wore helmets with visors that hid their entire face.

"Target sighted." Said one of the figures "Attempting seizure." Two of the figures rushed at Harry while the other three flicked their spears and several spells came shooting Harry's way from the orbs set into the weapons. He dodged the first spell and deflected the second with his sword. By this time the other two figures had gotten close enough to Harry to strike at him with their spears. He was forced to block the other two thrusts and allow the fire spell fired off by the third attacker to hit him in the back. It burned his shit but his skin seemed to take the damage rather well. Aside from the feeling of water that was a bit too hot the spell barely hurt. He attributed this to his junctions and mentally thanked Seth once again for distributing the Ultima out for him. He decided to give the spell casters a taste of their own medicine and tapped into his Contain Materia. He sought out the newly acquired Tornado spell and willed it to release its power from the orb. Sheyna had explained to him that casting some spells with materia had entirely different effects than casting the junction spell. He had to admit that she was right. Unlike when he used this spell as a junction. The tornado conjured by the spell appeared with huge boulders already inside a whirlwind that was already twice the size of one used through a junction spell. The soldiers were caught off guard

by the use of the materia and were all sucked into the vortex. Their armor was very sturdy however and the spell only managed to cause superficial damage. However it did give Harry the break he needed. He turned invisible and made his way to the nearest soldier. He didn't even think twice about slashing the sword straight through the man's midsection. Once again he was intoxicated by battle and these men provided a challenge similar to the Belhemoth. The others looked around confused and some fired spells in random directions. One of the soldiers got smart and flicked a button on the side of his visor. A red spot appeared in the middle of the visor and when it's light landed on Harry's position the soldier immediately shot a beam of electricity from his spear toward Harry. The wizard did the first thing that came to mind and waved his hand over himself and said "Protego!" A blue sphere appeared around his body and when the beam struck it the lightning was immediately sent back towards it's caster. The man was again taken off guard and the others rushed forward to engage Harry once again. Harry let his sword flow with his magic and slashed it in an arch in the direction of the men. The wave of magic hit the men and caused a huge gash in their armor where the strong cutting hex had sliced straight through the adamantium. Luckily for the men their armor managed to save their lives and only left them with a shallow cut along the abdomen. They weren't so lucky though when Harry charged them and again mercilessly cleaved another man in two. Now there were only three of them left and they all fired more spells at Harry. The wizard set up another shield charm and the spells were sent back at their casters. He tapped into his Contain Materia once again and this time released a Break spell on one soldier followed by a Freeze spell on another. The first soldier was turned to stone while the second was frozen solid. The last soldier hit a button on a bracelet around his wrist and lights shown down through the whole in the ceiling. A large craft was visible hovering just over the ship. A hatch opened on the bottom of the ship and something fell out and onto the deck above. Another thing came out of the hatch and this time fell right beside the truck. It was a large blue mechanized bug. It had four legs that blades at the end and a vicious looking scorpion's tale which appeared to have a laser attached to it. On the thing's back there were yet more guns and on it's face there were two large bulbous mechanical eyes that glowed an eerie yellow. The machine had mandibles like a spider and large claws like a crab. All in all it

was a vicious looking machine and Harry was sure that his battle just got a whole lot tougher.

...

Andrea Pryde was standing on the deck of the ship contemplating her life thus far. She had been in SeeD since she was nine years old and for the last twelve years it had been her life. She'd made friends and enemies in her line of work and she was proud of herself for her accomplishments in the last decade. She'd chosen the most difficult weapon to wield and she was damn good at it. The only people that could give her a run for her money were Antym Leonheart and Bastian Dream. They had been her friends once. Before the incident two years ago at Balamb Garden. They were only supposed to be there for a few hours while waiting for transport back to their own garden after a mission. She'd been in the medical bay and suddenly claxons started sounding and the facility went into high alert. When the alert was over she found out that Bastian and Antym had conspired to steal the legendary GF Griever from its holding vault in the Mid Level of the garden. Bastian had been caught red handed arming a bomb which had enough power to destroy the whole garden. He claimed he was disarming the bomb but no one believed him since him and Antym were always in on everything together. People also said they saw them outside the vault on the Mid Level shortly before. Bastian had pleaded with everyone to believe him and she remembered that day all too well.

"I didn't put that bomb there I swear!" Said Bastian "It was all Antym!"

"You really are a traitor." Commander Dinct had said "First you turn on Garden then you turn on your friend when you get caught and he gets away, you discuss me." The large man had then kicked Bastian in the stomach and sent him gasping for breath on the ground.

She remembered looking at him with all the hate she could put into one gaze. He had looked at her with his violet eyes pleading "Andy you believe me don't you?"

She hadn't said anything at all. She just glared at him and he had slumped in defeat. Most people wanted him executed but it was ruled

as barbaric and he was simply stripped of all rank and forced to turn over his gunblade and junctions. He had stopped pleading and left with his head held high. She remembered his last words that he'd said to the assembled crowd before he had left Bessaid Garden. "I never thought SeeD would be so fickle. You shun the people who give their all and don't even attempt to see the truth. From now on any SeeD is an enemy of mine and I'll act accordingly." This was met with mixed reactions. Most people shot retorts back that were mostly things like "Go ahead and try" or "Rot in hell traitor." She again had said nothing and had walked back into the garden with an emotionless mask in place. Shortly after that Sophia had approached her about Bastian

"You don't really believe he helped Antym do you?" She asked

"I don't know what to believe." She had said "I want to believe Bastian but I know that he was there with the bomb and even though he says he was disarming it everyone says they saw him outside the vaults with Antym right before Griever went missing."

"If he was with Antym then why would he stay behind with a bomb why not escape with his partner?" Asked Sophia "I don't believe that he's guilty and I can't work for people that turn on their own comrades without a second thought."

"What are you going to do then?" Andrea Asked

"I'll resign." She said "I don't care what my family thinks I'm not leaving my friend out there to fend for himself."

"Good luck then." Said Andrea

"You could come with me you know." Said Sophia

"I can't do that." Said Andrea "As far as I'm concerned he's guilty until proven otherwise."

"Are you that heartless?" Asked Sophia disbelievingly

"It's not heartless." Said Andrea "I just can't afford to take risks like leaving garden with no plan of action and no real means of supporting myself. If I resigned with you they'd strip me of my gunblade and junctions and unlike you I can't do any magic without junctions."

"I guess this is it then." Said Sophia "I hope you don't end up getting screwed over by SeeD too."

With that she had left and Andrea hadn't heard anything about them since then. What she had heard about was a group calling themselves Chaos Flame. None of SeeD's contacts were sure exactly who ran the group, but whoever the leader was they were building a group that had caught SeeD's attention. Their headquarters was suspected to be in Lucca and that was where she was headed. She was to find out whatever she could about the group and identify any members. The mission seemed simple enough, but she had a feeling that things were going to be a lot more complicated than that.

Her musings were interrupted by the sound of an engine overhead. She looked up to see a fairly large airship. It was hard to see the color of it since it was the middle of the night but she could make out a symbol of a black falcon emblazoned on the side of the ship. "Black Wings." She thought "What are they doing here?" A group of figures descended above the cargo bay and about eight more came down and dispersed through the rest of the ship. The figures near the cargo bay put some sort of mine on the floor and blew a hole through the floor and jumped down into the cargo bay. The other Black Wings were moving around the ship and they seemed to be searching for something. One of them spotted her and raised his spear weapon which she recognized as a Mage Lance and fired an ice spell at her. She threw up a Reflect spell and the ice shards were sent hurling back at their caster. Three of the other seven figures turned their attention toward her and one of them had the wherewithal to cast a Dispel on her reflect just as someone else shot a Thundaga spell her way. She allowed the spell to hit her and let the electricity flow through her giving her energy. Thanks to her junctions she was able to absorb lightning damage and it healed her instead of harmed her. She rushed the nearest figure and slashed out ruthlessly with her gunblade depressing the trigger to add more force to the blow. The

man tried to block with the shaft of his lance but sadly it did not hold against the power of Andrea's gunblade and the man and his weapon were cleaved in two. This seemed to anger the other Black Wings because they all rushed her at once. She smirked at their lack of combat discipline and lazily fired a Fira spell at them and caused them to scatter. She then ran at the nearest one and sliced straight through his left arm and continued on to the next taking a leg and the third took a gunblade through the chest. There was a rumbling sound and she looked up to see a very large bug drop down into the cargo bay. If she had to guess the Black Wings were meeting some heavy resistance down there. She didn't have time to contemplate this though because the airship had trained a spotlight on her and she had to avoid a rabid succession of machine gun fire coming from the ship. She heard more gunfire coming from somewhere else on the ship and people were starting to come out of their cabins to see what was going on. Most of them started to panic and the crew was busy trying to get people onto lifeboats and away from the ferry. While dodging the gunfire she noticed a black haired girl who was firing what looked like armor piercing rounds at the other Black Wings who were firing spells at her since they were unable to get close. It seemed that the girl was proficient in dodging spells though because they were unable to hit her. A few shots to their visors and the Black Wings were taken care of. Now all that was left was an airship which was steadily decimating the ship with its constant gunfire and a huge bug that was likely terrorizing the cargo bay. More guns came out of the ship and started firing at the other girl and even a few of the passengers and crew that were trying to flee on the lifeboats. The girl was managing to avoid the gunfire but the passengers and crew weren't so lucky. They were cut down by the airship's guns and two of the seven lifeboats were blasted to pieces. She was getting tired of running and decided to take some action against the guns. She didn't need to though because just then she sensed someone using a GF. That was impossible though because she was the only SeeD on the ship as far as she knew. The airship's guns stopped firing and the ship moved directly over the cargo bay. Whatever was happening it was centered in the cargo bay. She saw the girl out of the corner of her eye start heading in that direction and she decided to follow her.

...

Harry was having a tough time dealing with the mechanized bug. His sword didn't seem to be able to damage it. And his spells were hardly having an affect, not that the thing gave him much of a chance to use spells or attack with his sword. He was too busy dodging the rapid succession of gunfire. When he did manage to get close enough for a sword strike the thing would send out one of its monstrous legs in an attempt to chop him in two or one of its claws would come down and smash him. He'd suffered a few cuts and he was pretty sure he had a broken rib or two from where he hadn't managed to dodge a claw well enough. He dove behind some metal boxes and took a chance to cast a Cura spell from his materia. His cuts and ribs healed and he felt slightly less tired. Taking the opportunity once more since the bug had to reposition itself to get at him he focused on the strongest spell he could think of. When the creature came in sight Harry raised his hand and said "Avada Kadavra!" The killing curse sent a wash of pain through his entire body and he fought down a scream at the sheer agony of so much magic being forced through him all at once. The curse hit the creature right between it's mechanized eyes and caused a huge explosion which blasted half the thing's face off and destroyed one of the claws. However the creature was far from dead and Harry found himself once again dodging machine gun fire and an occasional laser burst from the huge scorpion tail. The cargo bay was in shambles with boxes shattered everywhere and holes in the wall. Harry was vaguely aware of some water leaking into the bay through a few of the holes in the hull and he knew that this was a very bad thing. Amazingly the truck hadn't sustained much damage at all. The windows were broken and the tires were destroyed but the armored section held against all the spells and gunfire that had impacted it. Harry mentally resolved to get some armor made of that stuff if he was going to keep getting into battles like this. He decided to use the truck's armor to his advantage and made a break for it. He didn't make it there however because the bug sent out a claw and caught him in a vice grip around the waist. It was squeezing tightly enough to cause pain but not quite tightly enough to do actual damage. The bug started to climb out of the cargo bay and Harry knew he needed to act. He focused on Seth and willed the GF to come and aid him. It happened more quickly this time and Harry felt the now familiar sensation of being pulled outside of the physical plain. Seth came forth from his whirlpool of sand but instead of using his whirlwind attack he wrapped his chain around the creature first and started to

swing it around like a yo-yo He slammed it into the walls and the floor and was causing some serious damage to the bug's armor. He finished off his attack by releasing the chain from around the creature and slashing viciously with his scythe blade.

When Harry returned to the physical plane he was on top of the truck's trailer and the bug was struggling to get back onto its feet. Water was now covering the entire floor and Harry didn't think too highly of trying to move around in ankle deep water trying to avoid gunfire. Thankfully for Harry Seth's attack had destroyed all but the tail laser which was now firing randomly due to the destroyed optical receptors. The airship above the cargo bay lowered some cables which wrapped themselves around the truck which Harry was still standing on. It started to lift the truck slowly out of the cargo bay and Harry was starting to get worried. There was a flash of lightning and the bug was reduced to a sizzling heap within seconds thanks to Sheyna's Thundaga spell. She was standing on the upper level of the cargo bay and was right now above where Harry was.

"Harry!" She shouted as she saw him being lifted onto the airship. She didn't see the figure behind her who was left from the original five who had attacked Harry in the first place. Harry tried to yell out but he didn't need to because a gunblade slashed the man from his right shoulder to his left hip and he was no more. Harry saw the female SeeD standing behind Sheyna and surveying the destroyed cargo bay with surprise.

"Get out of here!" Yelled Harry to Sheyna "The ship is sinking and you need to get to a lifeboat!"

"I'm not leaving you to them!" She yelled back. She made a running leap and Harry was a bit surprised when she actually managed to land beside him on top of the truck as he was a good fifteen feet from where she had been. He was even more surprised when the SeeD followed suit and landed on his other side.

"Back to back." Ordered the SeeD

Harry could see her reasoning and apparently so could Sheyna because they both complied and waited to be lifted into the ship.

Harry felt a lot of magic coming from the SeeD and he had a feeling he knew what she was about to do. As soon as they reached the ship Harry felt himself once again go away from the physical plain and this time it seemed as though there were clouds inside the airship. He saw several soldiers with their lances trained on the spot where the group had been standing. The clouds thickened and lightning arched around the room. As the hatch where the truck rose through closed a huge turquoise bird-like creature materialized out of the lightning. It let out a shriek of defiance and gathered an incredible amount of electricity where Harry assumed it's mouth was. It released the energy in a massive wave of power and Harry stared awestruck as the thunderbird charged the entire room full of electricity. The soldiers were literally roasted alive within their metal armor and as quickly as the bird and the clouds appeared they vanished. The group was left alone in the cargo hanger of the airship and they immediately hopped off the truck. The SeeD headed toward the entrance to the hanger and stood to one side with her back against the wall. Harry turned invisible and Sheyna took a position behind the trailer of the truck. The doors burst open and ten more soldiers came charging in. The first three were cut down brutally by Andrea's gunblade while the next few managed to stave off her attacks. Harry meanwhile started firing Freeze spells from his materia and managed to hit a few soldiers unaware. Sheyna opted to fire a couple of demolition rounds into the midst of the soldiers and this caused a lot of damage to their number. In short order the soldiers were dispatched and the group waited for sounds of approaching enemies before Andrea sealed the door and the group took a breather.

"Who the hell are these people?" Asked Harry

"You don't know who the Black Wings are?" Asked Andrea

"I know who they are I just didn't recognize them." Said Harry

"What are you two guarding in that truck that they could want?" Asked Andrea

"That's none of your business." Said Sheyna "Private client matter."

“Whatever.” Said Andrea “We need to get to the bridge and take over this ship, otherwise we’ll end up in a Black Wing base and I don’t think the three of us can take a whole battalion of soldiers.”

“What about the other people on the boat?” Asked Harry

“Most of them made it to the lifeboats.” Said Sheyna “The others, well...” She gestured to the soldier corpses littering the floor.

“I think I’m gonna be sick.” Said Harry

“First kill?” Asked Andrea, Harry simply nodded “Too bad this is no time to freak out.”

“She’s right Harry let’s head for the bridge and see if we can get this ship headed back to Lucca.

Harry nodded still feeling disgusted with himself for killing so many people.

“Get over it.” Hissed Seth “You didn’t have much of a choice since they were trying to kill you.”

Harry quickly pulled himself together and followed the two women out of the door. They stopped short when they heard voices coming down the corridor.

“What do you mean they haven’t come back yet?” Asked a harsh sounding voice “We sent the XG430 and Fifty fully armored soldiers after the offworlder.”

Harry suppressed a gasp of surprise at this statement. “How the hell do they know that?” He thought

“They haven’t returned sir.” Said another voice “The XG430 has stopped functioning and the soldiers we sent down to the ship were all compromised. We’ve brought the offworlder on board and two others on board along with a cargo which our contact indicates holds a great deal of valuables.”

“So where are the soldiers with the prisoners?” Asked the harsh voice again.

“I’m sure they have the situation under control.” Said the other voice. They came around the corner and ran right into Harry and the others. They just stood there for a minute each a bit surprised to see the other. There was a man wearing a normal soldier’s suit and a second man who was tall and had balding brown hair and looked to be in his mid fifties.

“Um sir?” Asked the soldier

“Kill the other two and capture the boy!” He ordered and charged the group while withdrawing an odd weapon that looked like three swords attached to one hilt. The soldier who was with him fired some spells from his Mage Lance and the group scattered. The man who appeared to be in charge of the ship engaged Andrea while the soldier focused on Sheyna. Harry decided to let the girls handle the two men and started heading for where he hoped the bridge was.

“Hey he’s getting away Colonel!” Said the soldier.

“No you don’t!” Said the colonel He managed to break through Andrea’s defenses and slashed the SeeD mercilessly across the abdomen. He then jumped into the air and landed in front of Harry. The wizard was slightly impressed with the man’s feat of agility considering his age. The man wasted no time in slashing his blade at Harry who parried the blow and struck back with one of his own. The man blocked his blow and they continued in this way for sometime. Sheyna meanwhile had dispatched the soldier and was bending over Andrea tending to her wound by using her restore materia. It seemed that the colonel finally realized that his last remaining soldier was incapacitated and that he was now greatly outnumbered. “You may have won this time boy.” Said the colonel “But the Baron Empire always gets what it wants.” With that he backed away from Harry and raised his hand in the blink of an eye and fired a spell. “Aero!” A blast of wind came from his hand and blew the three fighters back into the hanger door where they landed in a pile with Sheyna on the bottom and Harry sprawled on top. The colonel raised a radio to his mouth and barked orders into it. “All crew evacuate, engage emergency

autopilot! Mark my words boy I Colonel Stukov of the Baron Empire shall have my revenge!" With that he high tailed it toward the escape pods leaving the three young people alone in the deserted corridor. Claxons started blaring throughout the ship as the group pulled themselves together from their heap on the floor.

"Can whoever has their foot crushing my spine please move it?"
Asked Sheyna

"I think that's mine but I can't move because my arms stuck." Said Harry

"Can't breath." Wheezed Andrea

Carefully they moved themselves off the floor and made their way down the corridor where Harry had been headed before the colonel had cut him off. They passed several rooms and thankfully they were all marked, but none of them were the bridge. They found an elevator and went into it. The lift had four settings: Bridge, Deck, Quarters and Engine. They realized they were on the Quarters floor so they hit the button to go up to the bridge. It was completely empty when they got there. They were still in the air and were now over land. There was a picture of a map on one wall and Harry got his first look at Temprus' layout. There were seven continents in all and they were all huge in Harry's opinion. One was at the top of the world and based on the map it was covered in ice. The other six were situated beneath that with labels on them. The top continent was labeled Glacia. The continent on the far left of the map was named Eshar and next to it was one named Galbadia. The map was marked with a bridge between the two continents and in the middle of the bridge was a dot labeled Horizon City. Next to Galbadia was a continent named Myst. Myst was connected to Glacia by a small land bridge. Next to Myst was Gaea, but in between the two continents was a fairly large island called Wutai. Next to Gaea was. Next there was Spira which was also connected to Glacia by a land bridge however this one was much wider than the one connected to Myst. Finally on the other side of Spira was another continent which was labeled Baron.

"This place is huge." Said Harry without thinking.

"The bridge isn't that big." Said Andrea looking at him oddly. She followed his line of sight to the map. "It's true then." She said astonished "You are an offworlder; I thought the Black Wings were just crazy."

"Crap." Said Sheyna "We'll deal with this later right now we need to figure out how to stop this ship." She indicated a dot on the map which Harry assumed was the ship. It was heading north along the Spiran coast heading toward Glacia. Sheyna was hitting buttons like crazy trying to gain control of the ship, but nothing was responding. "Shit!" She shouted in frustration.

"The autopilot must be rigged to only respond to certain codes." Said Andrea "In case the ship gets high jacked."

"So what do we do then?" Asked Harry

"It's risky." Said Andrea "And it could make the situation worse."

"We'll have to take it." Said Sheyna

"Step aside." Said Andrea. Sheyna complied and Andrea walked up to the console and hit a few buttons "Yeah this might work." She then took her gunblade and smashed the console to pieces."

"What the hell are you doing!" Roared Sheyna

"I destroyed the navigation system." Said Andrea "Now all we need to do is find a way to make the ship land once we get over some land."

"Well according to this we're heading straight for..." Started Sheyna "Oh no." She said gravely while looking at the map.

Andrea turned to look at the map and cursed again. Harry looked at the map and saw that they were headed for a place called Thunder Plains. "What's so bad about the Thunder Plains?"

"You remember Quazicotl?" Asked Andrea

"Who?" Asked Harry

“Her GF.” Sheyna clarified “The thunder planes are like being in the middle of that only a bit less intense. The problem is that it’s a natural no fly zone. Any ship that goes in there doesn’t come out.

“Great.” Said Harry “Now what?”

“Brace yourself for a rough ride and an even rougher landing.” Said Andrea “And pray to Hyne that you survive.”

The ship cruised at a steady pace for about another hour and the first sun slowly started to rise into the sky. It didn’t stay in view long though because soon they were in extremely thick storm clouds. It didn’t take long for the metal in the ship to attract the lightning and the ship was struck with a huge bolt. Electrical energy surged through the ship and the group heard a resounding BOOM!

“I think those were the engines.” Said Sheyna

“How can you tell?” Asked Harry

She merely pointed to the monitor which was flashing a red message which said “Engine Failure.”

“Well...” Said Harry “This is just great.” He said sarcastically.

The ship started to speed downward at an incredible speed. Soon enough the ground was visible and the group braced themselves as best they could for the crash. The ship plowed into one of the lightning towers breaking it in two and it smashed into the ground with a resounding thud. The wings of the airship were completely severed off by the impact and the hull was cracked in several places. In the remainder of the bridge three broken and bloodied figures lay amongst the debris.

"Whose there?" Asked Harry looking around but seeing no one.

"Names are not important at this time." Said the voice "All you need to know is that I'm a wizard like you and that I'm here to help you."

"I don't trust disembodied voices." Said Harry "If you want me to remember the last thing that had happened. The ship had slammed into the lightning tower and he'd been thrown against one of the terminals. He remembered there being a lot of glass and feeling some cut across his body before blacking out. He wondered if he'd died. Then he thought about it and realized that he probably wasn't unless that tower had been Voldemort in disguise and that was just ridiculous.

"Hello Mr. Potter." Said someone's voice

"Whose there?" Asked Harry looking around but seeing no one.

"Names are not important at this time." Said the voice "All you need to know is that I'm a wizard like you and that I'm here to help you."

"I don't trust disembodied voices." Said Harry "If you want me to trust you then let me see your face."

"Fair enough." Said the voice an old man in silver robes appeared in front of Harry "Is that better?"

"A bit." Said Harry "So what's going on and if you're a wizard then you must know a way for me to get home."

"The answer to your first question is that you are extremely close to death at this moment so I am able to talk to you." Said the old man "As to your second I do know of a way for you to return to your own world, but it would be counterproductive for you to do so."

"What do you mean counterproductive!" Asked Harry flabbergasted "Surely you've heard of Voldemort."

"I am aware of young Tom's activities." Said the old man "However you will have more important things to worry about soon."

"More important...what?" Asked Harry "What could possibly be more important than Tom?"

"I dare say you will find out soon enough." Said the old man "Don't worry though you are bound by destiny so you will meet Mr. Riddle once again."

"So if you aren't going to tell me how to get home then what do you want?" Asked Harry

"There are things going on Mr. Potter that go far beyond anything you could imagine." Said the old man "One of them happens to concern Mr. Riddle and a Miss Weasley."

"Would does Ginny have to do with Voldemort?" Asked Harry

"One week has passed in your world since you left." Said the old man "As you are aware time shifts differently there. So since you've been on Temprus for about three months that means that right now the time ratio is about...well that's not important just know that only a week has passed in your world."

"Okay..." Said Harry "So what does this have to do with Ginny?"

"Well two days ago in your world Tom collected a few ingredients for a ritual." Said the old man "They include such things as basilisk venom, unicorn's blood, dragon's heart, griffin's tongue and a few others. The most potent ingredients though are the ashes of one Albus Dumbledore and a phoenix by the name of Fawkes."

"What the hell is he going to do with all that!" Asked a shocked Harry

"He is planning a ritual of his own devising." Said the old man "It is designed to increase one's magical power exponentially by using a catalyst with a huge amount of magical power and focusing the power into a living container where it is synthesized before returning to the person receiving the power enhancement."

"So what does this have to do with Ginny?" Asked Harry again

"I'm getting to that." Said the old man "You see Tom needed someone that had a similar magical core to himself to be the container. He wanted it to be you, but since you are now otherwise occupied he has decided to use the next best source..."

"You don't mean..." Trailed Harry

"Yes that's exactly what I mean." Said the old wizard "I don't want this ritual to succeed as I'm sure you don't as well. This is where you come in. I can allow you to introduce a variable into the equation so to speak."

"In English please?" Asked Harry

"I can allow you to help." Said the old man "But it will require you to sacrifice something that in all likelihood you will never get back."

"And that is?" Asked Harry

"That I cannot tell you." Said the man "All I can say is that it will be put to good use. In order for me to do this I need to know if you are willing to do it in order to save young Ginevra from a very horrible fate."

"I'll do it." Said Harry "I just hope I don't regret trusting you."

"I don't believe you will Mr. Potter." Said the old man "It's time for you to wake up now, I'll get everything in order and you'll be notified when it is time. I'll warn you that when Tom starts the ritual and when the process of your contribution starts it will be quite painful."

"That's encouraging." Said Harry sarcastically

"Until we meet again young Harry." Said the old man as he started to fade "By the way watch out for moogles."

"What?" Asked Harry but he didn't get an answer. He suddenly began to feel again and wished for the empty feeling of the void as soon as it began. His whole body hurt it felt like he had once again broken almost every bone in his body, and when he thought about it he just

might have. He let out a sorrowful moan and slowly opened his eyes. He was staring at a stormy sky until it was obstructed by a pair of olive green eyes.

"So you are alive." Said Andrea "You seemed to get the worst of it." She had a few cuts on her face and neck and Harry was sure she had more that he couldn't see since he was unable to move his head.

"How did you get off so easy?" He croaked out

"I got struck by lightning." She said as if this explained everything. Seeing his confused look she elaborated "Elemental Junction a lightning for me is like Curaga."

"I see." Said Harry "Sheyna?"

"She's still out but she isn't nearly as broken up as you are and I already healed most of her wounds." She told him "She had more blood near her so I treated her first. You looked so pale I thought you might be dead."

"Not yet." He said "You think you could heal me now?"

"I need to get the glass out first." She said "You're lucky I had to cut myself back open after I got struck and pull out the pieces that had been healed over."

"Ouch." He said sympathetically. He winced as she pulled a piece of glass out of his chest.

"I don't think I ever caught your name." Said Andrea "Isn't it Harold or something?"

"Harry." Said Harry and fought down another wince as she started pulling pieces out of his left arm. "Yours is Andrea right?"

"Yeah." She said "I knew you were the one from the docks that day. Your sword was a dead give away."

"I was afraid of that." Said Harry "I wasn't looking for information or anything I was just curious about the garden."

"Well you overheard some classified information." She said "By all rights I should arrest you and take you to the nearest garden just for that."

"Well I don't really have much of a choice in where I go in this state." He said

"But I'm not going to try that." She said "For one taking an injured person across the continent is a liability, second I don't even know where the nearest garden is at this point since all my stuff went down with the ship."

"I guess I'm safe for now then." He said

"For the time being anyway." She said "Although I am going to have to report you should I ever get back to Garden. Okay hold still the glass is out. Curaga!"

The warm magic washed over his body and mended the broken bones and healed the cuts. He was no means at one hundred percent when it was done but he could move again even if it was with a slight ache. "If I find my trunk I had a few Elixirs in it." He said "It was in the truck so it might have survived." He pushed himself to his feet and stood shakily. He looked around and saw that he was standing in a pile of debris and it appeared he'd been carried out of the wreckage. "Thanks for helping me out back on the ship." He told the SeeD

"The ship was sinking and that truck was the only way off." She said "It was the only way I could get out of that alive."

"Still you didn't have to carry me out of the wreckage." He said "You could've left me there to die."

"Traveling the thunder planes alone is like committing suicide." She said "Even though most of the fiends use lightning attacks and that

wouldn't hurt me at all, there are a few nastier ones that don't use lightning at all."

"You just can't take gratitude can you?" He said He moved over to Sheyna's prone form and saw that she had been healed and only sported a few cuts across her body. Like him and Andrea he clothes had several tears but somehow her guns and Katana still managed to stay on her belt.

"I only did what was most beneficial for me at the moment." He heard Andrea say "That doesn't deserve gratitude."

"Have it your way then." Said Harry. Sheyna groaned and started to shift. "Awake now are you?"

"I've got a headache." She groaned then her eyes shot open and she jumped to her feet. This was a mistake though because the sudden movement caused her to sway and she would have crashed to the ground had Harry not caught her.

"Whoa." He said "What's the rush?"

"What happened to the cargo?" She asked urgently

"Yes I'm fine I'm glad your okay too." Said Harry sarcastically "To answer your question I don't know."

"I imagine it's still in the hanger of the airship." Said Andrea "Although I wouldn't want to touch any of that metal around here." Her point was emphasizes when a bolt of lightning struck directly next to her.

"I see what you mean." Said Sheyna "But we can't just leave that stuff out here."

"I have an idea." Said Harry "I'll need my trunk though."

They made their way around to the back of the airship where the hanger was located. It was sealed shut but a few Fira spells to heat the metal followed by a Blizzaga and a gunblade slash made an

impromptu door. The truck was still basically in one piece although it was tipped to one side and the cab was detached from the trailer.

“I have got to get me some armor made of that stuff.” Said Harry

“I know what you mean.” Said Sheyna “So what’s your bright idea?”

“Accio Trunk!” He said raising his hand. He hadn’t done the summoning charm in this world yet and he didn’t know what to expect. He needn’t have worried though because his shrunken trunk floated out of the window and into his outstretched hand.

“How is that matchbox supposed to help you transport a trailer full of cargo?” Asked the SeeD condescendingly

“Watch.” Said Harry. He tapped the trunk with his finger and it expanded to normal size. He then upturned it and allowed all of his clothes and books to fall out. One book caught his attention that he hadn’t seen before. He picked it up and there was a piece of parchment attached to the cover it had two separate handwritings on it.

To our esteemed business partner,

We couldn’t give this to you on your birthday...

...So we decided that an early Christmas present would have to do...

In this book you will find the recipe for all our more ‘practical’ inventions

We know you won’t always be able to get into the shop to get them.

Be warned that some of the ingredients are hard to come by

But the results are well worth the effort

Here’s to hoping you wreak lots of havoc with these

The Dastardly Duo

Forge and Gred

P.S. You mean Gred and Forge oh bother of mine.

P.P.S No I'm certain I signed it right.

The note continued on in this fashion a few more lines until finally the last line of the letter said

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S Well we'll discuss this later since you want to make an issue of it.

P.P.P.P.P.P.P.S. There's no reason for you to be an ego maniac, crap the quick notes quill is on fi-

Harry stifled a laugh at the twins' antics even on parchment. He figured that if he could find the ingredients some of the things in the book would be very useful. He sat the empty trunk down and did an engorgement charm on the interior. The trunk's capacity increased by ten fold and Harry almost fell in trying to touch the bottom.

"What the hell?" Asked Andrea "How can that thing fit half your body into it?"

"Magic." Said Harry. She looked at him oddly and he sighed "I really mean that it's magic a charm to make the interior bigger, people do it all the time on my world."

"It's weird." She said "So your going to put the metal cases into that?"

"That's the plan." He said

In short order they had the cases packed into Harry's trunk and he even had enough room for his stuff to go on top of it. He shrunk his trunk and stowed it in his pocket.

"Hey there's one left." Said Sheyna pointing to a metal case that was stuck behind a part of the interior that had been dented badly.

"We'll just have to leave it." Said Harry "It's not like we can bend the adamantine back to get it."

"I suppose." Said Sheyna "Dad isn't going to like this at all." She groaned

"No he probably won't." Said Harry "So which way do we go now?"

"South." Said Andrea "That's where Lucca is and it looks like we're at the north entrance of the planes near the border of Glacia. We'll go south and through the ruins of Guodosalam then pass through Moonflow City and then Djose City after that we just take the Mi'hem Highway until we get to Lucca.

"But on foot this could take like a month!" Said Sheyna

"Do you have a better idea?" Asked Andrea

"Well no." She said "Harry you're the only one with Gil so you're the one who gets to decide where we eat and sleep during this little trip."

"But I don't know much about any of the places you just mentioned." Protested Harry "One of you should handle that sort of thing and I'll just pay. How bout you Andrea?"

"Why me?" Asked the perplexed SeeD

"You seem trustworthy enough and you're the most practical one. Plus you know a lot more about this place than me and combat too."

"Makes sense." Said Sheyna "We are going to run into fiends along the way since Spira doesn't have any intercity highways other than from Lucca to Djose and even that has Fiends running around it."

"Why are there so many of them anyway?" Asked Harry

"Something about a huge monster that used to spawn them before Spira merged with the rest of Temprus." Said Sheyna "It was around for a thousand years and some of the critters it spawned are pretty strong."

"No one really knows exactly." Said Andrea "I know that since the merger happened there have been five Lunar Cries and with four moons that means that there have been huge influxes of monsters during each time."

"What's a Lunar Cry?" Asked Harry

"It's when one or more of the moons' monsters group together and make a mass exodus onto this planet." Explained Andrea

"So the moons are full of monsters?" Asked Harry

"Your moon doesn't have monsters?" Asked Andrea

"I think there are some magical creatures, but nothing like the fiends I've seen here." Said Harry.

"Your world is different, a lot different." Said Andrea

"You get used to it." Said Sheyna

Andrea simply shrugged and the group headed south into the thunder planes

Their trek across the thunderous meadow was far from uneventful. Their first encounter happened about thirty minutes into their journey. "So you said there are lightning fiends here?" Asked Harry

"Flans, Chimeras, Yellow Elementals, Iron Giants and a few versions of living armor." Said Andrea "To name a few."

"What's an Iron Giant?" Asked Harry, his question was answered when a huge sword came crashing in his direction. He managed to doge just in time but the tip of the sword did graze his chest slightly. He looked up to see a huge blue armored figure holding a sword that was at least twice his height in length and at least half his height wide. He could see yellow eyes glowing behind the fiend's visor and the creature's breath could be heard like a resounding respirator.

“That is an Iron Giant.” Said Andrea in a monotone before rushing forward and jumping on the creature’s sword and vaulting up to it’s shoulder so that she was about fifteen feet in the air and level with the creature’s head. Electricity seemed to race through her gunblade and when she pulled the trigger when slashing at the creature’s neck it sounded like a clap of thunder. The metal of the giant’s helmet was cut through like butter; it then clattered to the ground with a resounding clang. Shortly after the armor started to topple and Andrea rode it halfway to the ground before jumping to the ground and rolling to lessen the impact before springing to her feet and facing the downed giant.

“Wow.” Said Harry truly impressed with her handiwork.

“Let’s keep going.” She said without turning toward them. They were able to make another hour before their next group of fiends. There were some yellow flans which Harry recognized and some sort of floating yellow wind chime with lightning holding it together.

“Either of you have any water magic?” Asked the SeeD

“Nope.” Said Harry “Ice no water.”

Sheyna didn’t answer instead she touched a yellow materia on her bangle and drew some sort of magic out of it. Harry was a little confused because she had told him that magic materia was always green. “Aqualog!” She shouted when she released the spell from the orb. Large blue water bubbles exploded all around the lightning monsters and it made a hissing crackly sound as the water fried the creatures with their own power. When the spell ended all that remained of the creatures was a large puddle of sizzling goo.

“What was that?” Asked Harry

“Enemy Skill materia.” Said Sheyna “It lets you copy magical skills that you see your enemies do while fighting. Each one is different depending who it was attuned to when it was first equipped.”

“So if I used one before anyone else it would do what?” Asked Harry

“Mimic what spells or skills were best compatible with your body and allow you to learn those.” Said Sheyna “Then if you took someone else’s you’d be able to learn whatever skills they could and the materia would retain whatever spells the first user learned with it.”

“And if someone took mine they’d be able to use it the same way.” He said catching on.

“Basically.” Said Sheyna.

They had several more encounters with fiends along the way and even came across some of those living armors that Andrea had mentioned. Unlike the Iron Giants these beings seemed hollow and they held no sword only spiked steel fists. Lightning didn’t have much of an effect on the beings so it was up to a combination of sword and gunblade strikes from Harry and Andrea with occasional demolition rounds or spells from Sheyna. She was running low on ammo and had had to resort to her katana a few times on less formidable monsters.

During the process of fighting monsters Harry and Andrea managed to expand their spell selection by a degree mostly stocking new lightning spells and an occasional Cura or Curaga spell now and then. There were however a few rare spells in the bunch. Harry had found a spell being carried by a chimera which caused the recipient to become poisoned unable to use magic and blind all at once. Instinctively he knew the spell’s name was Pain, he thought it was a very fitting name for such a spell. Another good find was the Flare spell that one of the Iron Giants they ran into had been stocking. Andrea had pointed it out to Harry saying that it would be a good choice to help augment his junctioned abilities. They continued in this way for about another eight hours until Andrea finally said.

“I see the travelers lodge up ahead.” She said calling over her shoulder. “We can rest up here for a while.”

“Good because if I have to kill another damn thunder lizard with this sword I think I’m going to collapse.”

"I could use a rest." Said Sheyna "Maybe they have ammo for sale in there."

"Possibly." Said Andrea "Too bad the E.F.N. is down out here. We'd be able to collect some money from our accounts with the amount of fiends we've killed."

"What's the E.F.N.?" Asked Harry

"Eshar Financial Network." Said Sheyna "The country is really xenophobic but they still somehow managed to gain control of most of the world's assets. I think people trust Eshar since they just like to keep to themselves and happen to have the highest security available as far as tracking electronic data. Everyone has an account with them because they always somehow know about any human that's born; it's kind of freaky really."

"So why would we get money for fiend killing?" Asked Harry

"Eshar feels responsible for some reason about the number of fiends on the planet." Said Andrea "They look at it as a way to atone for something that happened so long ago. The root lies back in the time of the first sorceress war before the merger happened."

"Wonder how they know how many fiends we kill though." Said Harry

"Satellites." Said Andrea "They are all over the planets inner orbit and they spy on most of the activities around the globe, at least places where their not jammed, like here."

"And the other governments just let them get away with it?" Asked Harry incredulously

"They really can't do much about it." Said Sheyna "The E.F.N. encourages fiend hunting which while extremely dangerous is a popular profession and helps control the monster population."

"We're here." Said Andrea "When we go in just let me do the talking."

"You're the boss." Said Harry

“Whatever.” Said Sheyna “Just make sure I get a nice bed and I’ll be fine.”

When they entered the travelers lodge the desk attendant gave them a sympathetic look when she saw their bedraggled state.

“On foot huh?” She asked “Did you see that airship crash a few miles out?”

“We saw it but it didn’t look like there were any survivors.” Said Andrea “Do you have any rooms available?”

“We only have one available.” Said the attendant “Something’s going on in Moonflow so there’s a lot of traffic coming from Macalania and even Bevelle.”

“Damnit.” Muttered Andrea “There are three beds aren’t there?”

“Yes and two baths, but it does run seven hundred a night.” Said the clerk

“We’ll take it.” Said Andrea “He’s got the bill.”

“700 Gil sir.” Said the attendant “Room 17”

Harry moved forward and withdrew some Gil notes to purchase the room, the girls simply headed down the hall. When Harry went to follow them he saw an old man in a corner of the room looking at him oddly. He locked eyes with the stranger and Harry could have sworn he felt someone try to use Legilimancy on him. He dismissed it instantly when the man called out to him.

“Nice job sonny.” He said in a wheezy voice “I remember when I was a lad about your age...” He trailed on as Harry walked past him not really wanting to hear where this was going. Unfortunately he did catch a few snippets along the lines of “...like a champ...” and “...still can’t believe she let me...” Harry really didn’t want to hear what exactly those statements referred to and he quickly hurried to his room. He stopped short of the door when he heard talking coming

through the door. He was going to go right in until he heard the subject matter, himself.

“You’re going to turn Harry in the minute we get out of here aren’t you?” Said Sheyna “You’ll just allow him to help you until you’ve gotten all you can out of him and then turn him over to your people to turn into some kind of super powered hit man.”

“I have a priority.” Said Andrea “Something like this is too important to just leave running around. Me knowing information like this and keeping it to myself simply to save one person trouble would be seen as treason. I could be killed for that in my organization.”

“That still doesn’t excuse what you’re doing.” Said Sheyna “For some reason he seems to trust you.”

“Who he trusts is his own business.” Said Andrea “Whether he trusts me or not isn’t my concern. For the moment he’s cooperating with me and making it easier to accomplish my mission, should he ever become a threat to my own safety or liability in completing my mission I will act accordingly. And that goes for you as well.”

“Is that a threat?” Asked Sheyna heatedly

“I am only stating facts.” Said Andrea “As long as our goals remain the same you won’t have to worry about that.”

“How will we know that if we don’t even know what your goals are?” Asked Sheyna and Harry thought it was a very good question.

“You’ll just have to risk it; either that or we could part ways.” Said the SeeD “For the record I’d prefer it if we didn’t, but if you don’t feel the need to take the risk then don’t.”

Harry figured this was as good a time as any to enter into the conversation so he opened the door with his key and entered. Sheyna was in the bed against the wall leaving an empty one beside it. On the other side of the empty bed and right beside the window was Andrea’s bed. “I don’t want to split up at the moment either.” Said Harry “And just so you know Sheyna I trust her because if she

wanted to do us any harm she's had plenty of chances to do it by now, plus she's only doing her job and I can understand her position all I ask in return Andrea is that you please inform me if I'm about to do or doing something that would hamper your mission and if I can stop doing it without hindering my own goals I'll do it."

"Fair enough." Said the SeeD. She then stood up from her seat on her bed and left the room.

"I still don't think you should trust her." Said Sheyna "If she reports you..."

"Somehow the Black wings already know about me." Said Harry "I don't know how that happened since there were only four people besides me who knew about the offworlder business. Either someone was eavesdropping or one of the four people who knew blabbed."

"It could have been either." Said Sheyna "We didn't really think about possible eavesdroppers since no one ever comes to the infirmary during the first couple of weeks of a dig unless they ran into fiends."

"But someone could have heard." Said Harry "And I'd hate to think that people I started to think of as friends would betray me like that, I experienced that once, even if it wasn't all his fault, and I don't want to go through that again."

"So you don't care if she reports you to SeeD?" Asked Sheyna

"They do have a right to know." Said Harry "If they act as the peace keeping force of the world and if my world is really is merging with this one then they should be prepared to deal with what's to come."

"What do you mean?" Asked Sheyna

"You've seen what I can do with your world's magic right?" He asked her and she nodded "Well if my world becomes connected to this one there will be thousands of people running around it just like me. Right now the population of those people isn't as big as people who can't do magic, but I have a feeling that with the amount of magic in this

world combined with the magic in mine that Muggleborns would be on the rise.”

“So that means...?” Asked Sheyna slightly confused about what a Muggleborn was.

“It means that after a few years of my world being merged with this one that there could be millions of people just like me. And with someone like Voldemort in a position of power in my world he could likely form an army and decimate SeeD and anyone else once he learns how to combine this world’s magic with Wizarding magic.”

“Why would you even care about this world?” Asked Sheyna “Wouldn’t it just be easier to worry about getting back home and not worry about what happens to a place you may never see again if you get back?”

“Maybe it would be.” Said Harry “But sometimes we have to choose between what’s right and what’s easy.”

“Your nobility might get you killed Harry.” Said Sheyna

“Your not the first one to tell me that.” Said Harry “I’m gonna see if they’ve got anymore armor for sale.” He looked at the ripped clothes she was wearing and said “You look like you could use some new clothes too.”

“They would help.” She said “Let’s go.”

They went back down the hall toward the entrance of the building and headed into the supply shop which was opposite the hall leading to the rooms. They found Andrea inside looking at some ammo that was on display.

“You should buy some different types of ammo.” She said turning to Sheyna “They’ve got a good selection here so you should stock up. There’s some good armor here too, nothing made of adamantite but it’ll protect you from some damage during a fight.”

"I figured we'd get some of that." Said Harry "And we need to get you two some new clothes, can't have you walking around in tattered rags for the next few weeks."

"We should get some Tents too." Said Sheyna "We won't always be able get into an inn especially between here and Moonflow."

"What's going on there anyway?" Asked Harry

"Blitzball National Finals." Said Andrea "Winning team goes on to the world championships in three months."

"And Blitzball is what exactly?" Asked Harry

"Most popular sport in the world." Said Sheyna "It's played in a sphere which has no gravity in it, there are six players on each team and the object is to get a ball into the other team's goal and score more times then your opponent."

"Sounds like football." Said Harry

"Football?" Asked Sheyna "Know what never mind."

"This game sounds more like Quiditch anyway." Said Harry "I'll have to explain that to you later."

"Sounds good." Said Sheyna "So what's my budget?" She asked

"Well I've got about 22,000 so we have to stretch this until we get to a place where we can get more, so take 3,000 and get whatever you think we'll need." He pulled out a stack of notes and handed them to her. "I'd stay and help but I'm starting to get a headache."

"Yeah Harry you are looking a bit green and your eyes have a little glow to them, we really need to see if we can get you some mako antidote in Moonflow."

"You've got mako poisoning?" Asked Andrea

"Just a bit." Said Harry "I'll be fine though."

"If you say so." Said Andrea

The rest of their time at the travel lodge passed uneventfully. Sheyna managed to stock up a decent amount of ammo and got herself and Andrea some new clothes. Mostly jeans a couple of new jackets and some T-shirts. Some armor was also purchased. A few body vests that fit underneath shirts. They were light but Andrea had assured them that they were very good protection. The following morning after an almost fitful night's rest for Harry they headed out of the traveler's lodge and headed south toward Guodosalam.

Once again they ran into a good number of fiends, but unlike the last time they fared a little better since there were less Iron Giants and living armors south of the lodge. This didn't mean that they had no problems however. While walking Harry noticed a rock that looked like it had a cactus painted on it.

"What's that?" He asked

"It's a cactuar shrine." Said Sheyna looking a bit confused "But they only appear where cactuars are..."

"What do you call that?" Asked Andrea pointing behind them. Harry looked around to see what he could only describe as a miniature cactus man. It was green and tiny and it had three long needles sticking out of the top of its head with smaller needles running along its side. The creature seemed to laugh at them in a high pitched voice and it started running in place and hopping from side to side.

"It wants to fight us." Said Andrea

"What's a little pipsqueak like that going to...?" Started Harry but he was cut off by the creature pointing its head in Harry's direction and firing a barrage of several tiny but very sharp and hard needles. The wizard was shocked for a moment and before the needles slammed into his chest. Luckily for him his new armor absorbed most of the damage but a few needles did manage to prick their way through the material.

Andrea rushed the creature intent on severing it limb from limb only to have the nimble creature dodge before shooting back out and ramming into her arm with the sharp needles on it's head. She hissed in pain and the creature dodged again as she swatted at it with he gunblade. Sheyna was firing at it but it seemed that the little cactus was well averse at dodging bullets as well. The creature stood on one of it's legs and started to spin around with it's head pointing outward. It released a constant barrage of needles as it spun and the small pins tore into the fighter's legs mercilessly. Harry was getting sick of the little creature and fired a Freeze spell at it. The spell immediately covered the cactuar in ice and when the spell was finished the cactuar was no more than a frozen cactus. Harry cast a Curaga on his legs which had been badly damaged by the needles and then strode forward and checked the cactus for any useful spells. He found a Haste spell and an Aero spell and drew a few of the each before shattering the frozen cactus with his sword. "Damn cactus." He cursed

...

Soon enough they came to the end of the planes and the storm started to subside slightly. The second sun could be seen setting as they made their way toward a small stream that flowed out of the cave.

"We should be safe camping here." Said Andrea "Most of the fiends like to stay inside the planes and there aren't too many past this point until you get outside Guodosalam."

Harry simply nodded in response as talking was bringing him sharp pains to the chest lately. He figured it was yet another side affect to the mako and that it would pass like all the other ones once he got the counteragent. They cleared an area free of debris from some nearby trees and set up their tents for the night. Harry thought that the tents were a lot like wizard tents since they came in small caplets that you threw down after you pressed in a cap. There was then a flash and a one person tent. He crawled into his spot and tried to get some sleep that he was almost positive wouldn't be peaceful.

...

The next morning the group made their way into the ruins of Guodosalam. According to Andrea it used to be the main settlement of a race called the Guodo, however now the Guodo had bred themselves out by continuous interrelation with humans. Apparently you could tell someone had Guodo blood in them if they had pointed ears and slightly longish arms.

"The city was abandoned after the mergers started." Said Andrea
"They left because there were too many fiends coming through something called the Farplane. No one knows for sure what that was anymore, but most say it was a special place where you could talk to the spirits of the dead."

"So wouldn't there still be fiends here then?" Asked Harry

"They collapsed the entrance to the Farplane and the fiends that were coming through have left for more open areas." Explained the SeeD

"We don't need to stop here." Said Sheyna "The city's deserted and we can keep straight on through and be in Moonflow by nightfall."

"There may be some good draw points around here." Said Andrea
"We can always use more magic to junction."

"We can take a couple of hours to look around." Said Harry "I'm not looking forward to fighting too many more fiends right now anyway."

They split up and looked around the deserted city. There were several small passages and caves that Harry assumed must have been dwellings at one point. Near the back of the cavern was an ornate pink door which looked like it had been sealed tight. Harry walked up to it and examined it. It had intricate carvings on it and Harry saw an ancient looking sign that looked like it would crumble into dust if someone touched it. He could still make out the words Château de Leblanc. Harry thought that sounded like a beauty boutique rather than a palace, which was what the door appeared to be concealing. Curious he tried an unlocking charm on the door. "Alohamora!" He said putting his hand on the door. He didn't know what the results would be, but he was happy when for once his spell

didn't cause him much pain at all, merely a tingling sensation in his hand. The door slid open with a soft rumble as rock that had been still for centuries was shifted. A shower of dust rained down as the door slid aside to reveal an entrance hall that looked as though it had once been grand. There was a molding red carpet running the length of the hall and rusty suits of armor along the sides. Tarnished chandeliers hung from the ceiling. Harry could feel magic coming from further within the palace and walked further up the hall. When he got to the end the red carpet forked and continued up two stairways which were positioned on opposite sides of the grand corridor. Under the stairs was a grand arched door which led further back into the mansion. Harry decided to look downstairs first and headed through the arched doorway. He came into what looked like a dining hall judging by the tattered cloth on a crumbling table and the overall feel of the room with its candle holders along the walls and table and chair sets.

He could still feel some magic and it was stronger this time. He looked around and saw a purple light flickering in the corner of the room. Not wanting to repeat his mistake by blindly drawing in magic like he had with the Ultima draw point Harry approached this draw point cautiously. He tentatively started trying to sense the magic and found that it was an extremely powerful spell. It felt different than Ultima though almost like a patronus only different. Harry decided that he wanted this spell as it seemed like it would be very handy.

"What is this spell Seth?" He asked his guardian

"Holy." Answered the serpent "If you draw that you won't be able to cast it until you have gained control of your magic, it is the most powerful white magic and can sometimes even surpass Ultima in strength."

"Do you think I should draw it then?" Asked Harry

"It is your decision." Said Seth "I will say that the spell junctions very well and that finding a draw point for it is extremely rare."

"I'll draw it then." Said Harry. He focused on the magic again and willed it to join with him. He felt the familiar surge of energy as a new spell fused with his magical core. He managed to get ten of the

powerful spell and he immediately had Seth junction the spell to where it would do the most good.

He returned to the stairway room after looking through the dining area thoroughly and headed up the right staircase. He saw pictures of what he assumed were Guodo hanging on the walls around the room. They all had odd protrusions out of the tops of their head and their hair seemed to defy gravity with the way it stuck up and curved. One of the pictures looked more human being of a less grayish skin color and clearly looking more human than the others. The caption of the portrait read "Seymour Guodo, Son of Jyscal Guodo, Maester of Yevon." The man in the portrait had hair that was a dark blue and his eyes seemed to carry a look of pride, power and more than a little dementia. When Harry reached the top of the steps he was expecting to see a grand bed chamber of a king of some sort. What he wasn't expecting was to open the door and immediately be bombarded by the look of intense pink color. Everything in the room was either neon pink or striking purple. On the walls of the room were several mirrors and on one wall was enormous picture of a woman wearing a purple robe which barely covered her ample front. She had short blond hair and blue eyes. She held a fan in one hand and Harry assumed she was attempting some sort of erotic pose with her legs crossed one over the other. There was a name on the picture as well. "Leblanc." It said . Harry looked around the room and seeing nothing of importance he was about to leave the room when a blue sphere on the ratty dressing table caught his eye. He walked over and picked it up. He almost dropped it when he saw an image within and heard a voice start to speak. The image was of a young woman with short brown hair. She had weird eyes since one was blue and one was green.

"I am making this recording for anyone who seeks to know the truth." The woman said "I fear that in time people will forget about Sin and the Aeons and end up repeating the mistakes of the past. I will no allow this to happen. We worked very hard and lost a lot of good friends defeating that monster and then Vagnagun after it. Sin was the result of unchecked magic. It was in essence simply armor used to house the spirit of a summoner who lost control of his power. After that the Aeons were forced to power his monstrous creation and a thousand years of a spiral of death happened. The monster known as

Sin destroyed town after town and city after city. What it didn't destroy it's spawns which it left behind finished off. Through it all though the people of Spira persevered. Many a summoner took the damned path of destroying Sin and bringing a calm to its fury even though it only lasted ten years and they didn't get to see it. There was so much death that the souls of the dead were no longer accepted at the gates of the afterlife. The Aeons stepped in and created the Farplane which is a place to house the souls of the dead in the hopes that one day the gates of the afterlife were accessible once more. This continued for ten centuries until my father brought the last calm to Sin's rampage. When Sin returned I took the same path as my father and was prepared to die to give the people hope that they had atoned for something they hadn't even done and that the monster known as Sin would finally be gone forever. I was prepared to die for what I believed in so that the people I loved would survive. However during the course of my journey my world was torn apart. Seymour Guodo Maester of Yevon was a common murderer and the other Maesters of the so called divine faith were themselves the very embodiment of what the religion was supposed to be opposed to. My friends and I were shunned by almost the entire world and even hunted by our own government. We took refuge with the Al Bhed, which were people who opposed everything Yevon stood for but who desperately wanted Sin gone. By using our combined resources we finally managed to overcome the monster and the world was finally set right. The victory wasn't without cost though. The souls of the dead still wouldn't go to the afterlife and we lost more than one friend during our journey. The biggest loss of all was undoubtedly the Aeons. The path of a summoner was no longer needed so the power that the guardians of our world once allowed us to wield was lost. The world was at peace for a time until a vengeful spirit decided to resurrect a secret weapon that once again proved how bigoted the religion of Yevon was. Me, my cousin and a person who I am proud to call my best friend managed to quell the spirit by journeying into the heart of the Farplane and destroying the monstrous machine known as Vagnagun. After that the spirits of the dead were finally allowed into the after life and the world finally had its peace. I leave this record in the hopes that our struggle is not forgotten. Already I see the next generation growing more and more complacent and I fear that another spiral of death is inevitable. I would request the hearer of this recording to

heed my words and do everything in your power to stop the next spiral of death.”

Harry stared at the sphere for a moment as the image of the young woman faded away. He pocketed the sphere and decided to show it to Sheyna later since she would be able to tell him more about what that could possibly mean. He knew that he had been in the mansion for longer than two hours and he hoped Andrea wouldn't be too mad. He liked the SeeD, she was efficient and despite the cool exterior he could tell she had a good heart on the inside. He also knew that she had been dead serious when she was talking about what would happen if their goals started conflicting. He'd hate to have to lift a sword against her, but he knew that it may very well come to that if she tried to force him into captivity with Garden.

He made it back to the meeting point to see two very annoyed looking women scowling at him. “And where have you been?” Asked Sheyna “We've been waiting here almost an hour, she almost left you.”

“He's lucky I decided to wait a little while.” Said Andrea “He does have the spending money after all, although we can probably access the E.F.N. in Moonflow.”

“I found this weird door and decided to go inside.” Said Harry “Found something pretty interesting too.” He took the sphere that he'd found in the bed chamber of the mansion out of his pocket and showed it to them.

“It's a recording sphere.” Said Sheyna “Looks really old too. We used to find a lot of those during digs on Bikinel.”

“What's on it?” Asked Andrea

“A woman talking about something called Sin and Aeons.” Said Harry “She kept saying she didn't want the spiral of death to be reborn.”

“That sphere must be over Ten thousand years old.” Said Andrea “It had to have been taken before the mergers started.”

"Sin is a legend." Said Sheyna "It's what parents tell their kids will come and get them if they misbehave. This thing says that it was real?"

"Why don't we watch it." Suggested Andrea "It could be very informative."

Harry played the sphere and the group watched in silence once again as the woman spoke about Aeons and Sin.

"Do you know who that person is?" Asked Harry

"It would have to be Lady Yuna." Said Sheyna "She's fabled to have defeated Sin. That woman matches her description."

"If this is to be believed that means there's a way to summon GF's on a greater level than junctioning." Said Andrea

"What does that have to do with GF's?" Asked Harry

"It's what the guardians call themselves." Said Andrea "If you asked some of the older ones like Shiva what they are all they will say is 'We are Aeons.'"

"So an Aeon is the same thing as a GF?" Asked Harry

"In essence." Said Andrea "Little is known about the specifics of summoning Aeons into the physical plane and having them stay there for longer than a few minutes."

"She said that it couldn't be done anymore." Said Harry

"It's hard to say what could or couldn't be done." Said Andrea "No one remembers how Aeons were summoned in the first place and most settle for using Materia or GF's. There are the occasional Eidolon summoners, but those are extremely rare."

"Let me guess." Said Harry "An Eidolon is another kind of summon."

“Yes.” Said Andrea “They’re most common in Myst although I think there are a few in Gaea, Glacia and Baron. When they summon they have almost complete control over the guardian and can cause a great deal of havoc with their power. Thankfully they take an oath of preservation of life that if they break they lose their ability to summon.”

“Well that’s a plus at least.” Said Harry

They left Guodosalam shortly after that and as the second sun was setting they came upon a large river. This wasn’t the big sight however. Suspended above the river in series of interconnected roads and panels was a city. It was covered almost the entire length of the river and in the water strange balls of light seemed to swivel around as if they were alive.

“Wow.” Said Harry “This must be Moonflow city.”

“Right in one.” Said Sheyna “This place is going to be hell getting through with all the visitors and media covering the Blitz Championships.”

“It will be simpler to just wait until the game is done before we leave.” Said Andrea “I just hope we can find a room.”

“You should put that sphere in your trunk Harry.” Said Andrea “Their not all that resilient and that thing is downright brittle from age.”

“Yeah your right.” Said Harry. He took out his trunk and enlarged it. He put the sphere in a corner of the trunk and closed it. He shrunk it but before he could put it in his pocket it was snatched out of his hand by a pink blur and he heard a high pitched “Thanks kupo!”

“What the hell?” He asked aloud.

“After it!” snarled Andrea running after the retreating pink creature.

“Damn moogles.” Muttered Sheyna before running after the creature as well.

The words of the old man came floating back into Harry's head as he chased after the small pink creature "Watch out for moogles."

Chases, Blitzball and Carnage

The moogle tore down the crowded streets ducking and dodging people and using its small size to its advantage. The trio was hard pressed to keep up with the small creature.

“How can that thing move so fast?” Panted Harry as they turned a street corner and headed down another street. They were passing an area full of street merchants and the moogle was hopping from the top of one stand to another and rapidly gaining distance away from the group.

“It’s getting away!” Said Andrea “Haste!” She cast on herself and a yellow aura seemed to resonate from her. She was now running much faster than normal and people were jumping to get out of her way. Harry cast the spell on Sheyna and then himself and tore down the street after her. The moogle abandoned its strategy of stall hopping and as it passed a stand selling grenades it grabbed one and pulled the pin before throwing it behind it. People scattered as the small bomb hit the walkway and blew a hole into the rigging which made up the street. This didn’t daunt Andrea though as she neatly vaulted over the hole and continued the chase. Not wanting to be outdone Sheyna jumped and flipped while in the air before landing on the other side and continuing the chase as well. Harry mentally shrugged before following suit. He was a bit nervous about the moogle’s sanity if it tossed a grenade into the middle of a crowded street, because there was no telling what it would do. Harry really didn’t care what happened to the annoying creature at this point he just wanted his trunk back.

They continued the chase and the moogle didn’t seem to be showing any signs of slowing down. They came into an area near a large stadium; Harry assumed this was the Blitzball stadium since this was where the majority of the people were crowded near. Harry suddenly had a brilliant idea. He kicked himself for not thinking about doing it sooner and he heard a mental voice which sounded suspiciously like Hermione saying “Honestly Harry are you a wizard or a muggle?” He raised his right hand and said “Accio Trunk!” This proved to be a big mistake. The last time he’d used the summoning spell his had been the only trunk nearby, now though it seemed that many people had

trunks of one sort of another and they all came rushing towards Harry. There were shouts and angry protests made at the moving trunks and Harry was forced to break the spell before it even affected the moogle's progress. His delay had cost him though because he barely saw Sheyna in the distance. He ran to as fast as he could and barely managed to keep her in sight.

Eventually they managed to corner the creature in an abandoned alleyway. It was backed up against a wall and Harry finally got a good look at it. The moogle had a small beak for a mouth and was pink all over except for an antenna with a red ball on the end and a pair of small purple wings on its back. It stood at roughly two feet tall and it held the trunk in its left hand and gave the group a look of defiance.

"Hand over the trunk and no one gets hurt." Said Andrea

"You don't scare me, kupo!" Said the moogle "I'll take you all on!"

"Look you little shit give us the trunk or else!" Snarled Sheyna

"Or else what kupo?" Said the moogle boldly

Sheyna pulled out one of her guns and leveled it at the moogle. "I'll blow you to kingdom come." She said

"Oh really?" Said the moogle "If you want it so bad then catch!" He threw the trunk over their heads and they all turned around and tried to catch it. The sudden movement caught Harry off guard and he was bowled over by the two girls and they created a heap on the alleyway ground. The moogle jumped over them and caught the trunk before it hit the ground and started running once again. They pulled themselves together quickly and the chase was on once more.

They eventually chased the moogle to a fork in the road that branched in three directions. The moogle looked around as if trying to think of a direction and then snapped one of its fingers and there were now two more moogles. They each chose a different direction and it seemed they were running even faster now.

“Shit it used a Multiply spell.” Said Andrea “And it used Haste on itself, it’s just been playing with us.”

“We split up then.” Said Harry “One of them has to be the real one.” He took the rightmost path and continued chasing the elusive creature.

The moogle turned its head over its shoulder and called back to the wizard “You don’t give up kupo!” It then started to flap its wings and it took to the air. Harry groaned and then decided to try the summoning charm again.

“Accio Moogle!” The creature was snatched out of the air and came zooming into Harry’s hand. “Now I’ve got you.” Said the wizard

“But I don’t have the trunk.” Said the moogle “Sucker!” It then turned into smoke and in its place was an active grenade. Harry quickly threw the bomb into the air and it exploded harmlessly.

“Robson!” He heard someone call and not thinking they were talking to anyone he knew ignored it. “Hey Robson!” He heard this time closer before someone grabbed his shoulder “Get your ass into the locker room we’ve got to be in the sphere in ten minutes!”

“I think you’re mistaken sir.” Said Harry “I’m not...”

“Are you calling me a liar boy!” Roared the man. He was a stout man but well built and he appeared to be in his forties. He had balding blonde hair and steely grey eyes that screamed authority.

“No sir I’m just saying...” Started Harry again

“And I’m just saying get your sorry ass into the locker room!” Roared the man and he grabbed Harry’s arm and started pulling him away.

Harry tried to jerk his arm away but the man had a strong grip on him. He could’ve shaken him off but he didn’t want to hurt the guy so he tried talking his way out of it again. “My name is Harry Potter not Robson!” He shouted

“Don’t try the shit with me today Robson.” Said the man “You’ve been cutting practice all week and you’re lucky I can’t replace your ass on such short notice.”

Harry sighed and wondered what he had ever done to piss off the higher powers so much that he would end up in these kinds of situations.

“For the last bloody time let me go or I’m going to have to hurt you.” Said Harry more forcefully. For his comment he received a punch to the gut. Even with his body armor on it still hurt badly and he crumpled a bit.

“Boy I’ve worked long and hard to get the Marlboros this far and I will not let a sorry upstart like you ruin my chance at the world championship!” Roared the man turning a shade of purple that would make Uncle Vernon jealous. “Now we are going to the locker room and you ARE going to play center and we ARE going to kill those damn Aurocs if it’s the last thing we do!” With that he pulled Harry into the stadium and ushered him into the locker room. There were five other people wearing green uniforms with a picture of some kind of plant on it. The plant had several tentacles and a huge maw with long sharp teeth which dripped with saliva. “I found Robson!” Said the coach

“Can someone tell this idiot that I AM NOT ROBSON?” Yelled Harry

“Wait you not Robson.” Said the coach

“That’s what I’ve been trying to tell you for the last twenty minutes!” Yelled Harry “You’re lucky I didn’t kill you when you hit me in the gut!”

“Shit.” Said one of the team members “The game starts in five minutes and we need a center.”

“You ever play Blitzball boy?” Asked the coach

“Well...” Started Harry nervously. He didn’t like where this was going.

“Good get your ass over there and get on a uniform.” Said the coach

"But I don't..." Started Harry again

"Listen boy this is our last chance, do you hear me?" Yelled the man
"We were lucky to get this far and if we win here we only have to win a few more games and then we're the champs!"

"I understand that but..." Started Harry but yet again he was cut off.

"Look I don't know what happened to my center but I need someone or we'll have to forfeit and we are NOT forfeiting."

Harry shook his head. There was nothing for it then. He had been curious about the game but not THIS curious. He really hoped Sheyna or Andrea got his trunk from that moogler. Harry swore that if he ever found the creature again he'd get even for this. He went over to the locker and took the proffered uniform from one of the team members. There were four men all with black hair and slightly tanned skin and one creature that Harry had never seen before. By the creature's build he could tell that it was male. It looked vaguely humanoid but it had blue fur and silver shoulder length hair. A lion-like tail poked through a hole in the back of the uniform and the creature's facial features had distinct feline qualities to them. The most bizarre aspect of the creature was probably the horn that protruded from its forehead.

Once the coach left the locker room the team turned to Harry. "Listen man I'm sorry about Coach Willham." Said one of the black haired men. "He's just obsessed with winning the cup, been trying for the last twenty years and this is the closest he's ever gotten, his wife's making him retire after this season because she says it's bad on his heart."

"Why would he think I was your center?" Asked Harry

"You look like Robson a bit." Said another team member. "He styles his hair the same way you do."

"It's not styled it's just the way it is." Said Harry running a hand through his unruly mop of hair.

"Well we got two minutes so here's the big question." Said the first team member again "Please tell us you've played Blitzball before." He said pleadingly

"Not once." Said Harry "I only know the basic object of the game."

"Puny man will loose Marlboros chances at championship." Said the blue creature "Roland will crush you if Marlboros loose." He finished while cracking his huge knuckles and Harry had no doubts that he was very serious about his statement.

"I'm Harry by the way." Said Harry

"Giro." Said the first man that had spoken to him.

"Jun." Said the man standing next to Giro "Me and Giro are the forwards.

"Klackon." Said a man who was slightly more stout than the others. "I'm Goalie."

"Rixon." Said the last man. He was a little taller than the others and clearly more muscular. "Roland and I are the rear defenders."

"And what exactly am I suppose to do?" Asked Harry

"If you see the other team with the ball get it way from them and if you get the ball pass it to one of us or try to get it into the goal. The only real rules are not to try and kill the other team, although that's ignored most of the time." Said Rixon "I'm sure you've seen a game before so you know all about the kinds of techniques people use right?"

"No..." Said Harry sheepishly

"We are so gonna loose." Said Giro "When I get my hands on Robson I'm going to introduce my foot to his sphincter."

The coach came bustling back in and looked at his team. "Alright boys this is it!" Said Wilham "I want you to go out there and win or die trying!"

"Oh great." Thought Harry "The last time I heard something like that before a sports match I ended up in the hospital wing afterwards." He followed the team out of the locker room and into the entrance of the sphere. He took a deep breath not really knowing what to expect and walked into the elevator.

...

Sheyna was getting very irritated by the small creature running ahead of her. She desperately wanted to put a demolition shell through the moogle's head. She'd chased the moogle headed down the middle path and this also happened to be the most populated direction. The moogle was moving extremely fast and it was taking everything she had to keep up with it. The creature flew around a corner and when Sheyna got around the corner she groaned aloud. There in front of her was a stand selling what else but stuffed moogles. She looked around hoping the creature had gone anywhere but right there. Of course the stand keeper was gone so there was no way to tell the real one from the fakes unless you touched them. Then Sheyna thought of something and smirked.

"I wonder how flammable these things are." She said aloud. She focused on her fire materia and the tell-tale green glow of magical materia surrounded her. "Fire!" She said and a ball of burning fire hit the stand and set it a flame. Immediately one of the moogles flew into the air and started running away.

"You crazy bitch!" Called the moogle over his shoulder "What's in this trunk that's so important? Makes me wonder what I found, kupo."

"What the hell did you do to my stand?" Yelled a voice behind her. She ignored it and instead resumed chasing the moogle.

The moogle once again managed to corner itself in an alley and it groaned aloud. "Oh well." He said "It was fun while it lasted. Too bad I don't have your trunk." He then turned to smoke and just as with

Harry a grenade was left behind. Sheyna quickly left the alley just in time to hear a loud BOOM and some nearby woman scream as the grenade exploded.

"Damnit." She thought "Guess I better try and find the others now." She walked around for about another twenty minutes until she saw a commotion up the street.

"I've got a game to get to babe." Said a man with black unruly hair. By the sheen in his hair Sheyna could tell it was full of gel. "I was supposed to be in the stadium twenty minutes ago."

"So now I'm not important enough for you?" Asked an angry brunette "Fine go play your stupid game Kyle it's over!"

"Good." Said Kyle "I was sick of your crap anyway."

"Fine." Roared the girl

"Fine." Said Kyle "I hope you have a horrible life."

"Same to you." Yelled the girl."

Her attention left from the arguing couple when she heard loud cheering from somewhere nearby. There was a large screen in an outdoor café which was showing the Blitzball National Championships. The game was just starting and the announcers where calling out the team rosters.

"Ladies and gentlemen welcome to the 2031st annual Spira Blitzball Championships!" Said one announcer "I'm Bradock Klixon here with Grisson Pile and we'll be your announcers for today's exciting match."

"That's right Brad." Said Grisson "Today's match between the only remaining Blitzball team which used to play in the old spheres, the Bessaid Aurocs, are facing against a team that by all rights was never supposed to make it into the championships It's the Moonflow's own Marlboros."

"Yes Griss it seems that the hometown underdogs are sorely under appreciated even within their own city." Said Brad

"Well it doesn't matter now Brad because here come the Aurocs!" A panel in the wall of the sphere near the Aurocs' goal slid aside and allowed six yellow clad people to swim into the zero-G environment of the sphere. "At Goalie we have Salus Grippa. Left and Right Defenders Allen Krook and Jassuna Craig, Left and Right Forward Hilda Kung and Richello Frag. And center we have none other than Davon Dream!" The crowd went wild during the announcements and went even wilder when the last name was mentioned. The center on the other team looked a lot like Bastian in Sheyna's opinion and she figured they must be related somehow since they had the same last name.

"And now playing for the Marlboros." Said Griss and he was met by a series of boos although there were some cheers as well. "At Goalie, Roper Klackon, Right and Left Defense Rixon Brecka and Roland Ronso, At Left and Right Forward Giro Gravestorm and Jun Aluma, and at Center Forward Kyle Rob...Wait that's not Robson, well folks it appears that the Marlboros had to find a substitute." The camera zoomed in on a figure and Sheyna felt her jaw drop when she saw Harry.

"I left him alone for like what half an hour?" She thought sardonically "How in the hell did he get into the finals?"

"Hey what's that guy doing in my spot?" Yelled the man who had been arguing with his girlfriend "He can't even swim right!"

And it was true Harry was having some difficulties making his way into the center of the field in order to take his position. The announcers were trying to hold in their laughter but the crowd didn't have any qualms about showing their amusement with the spectacle that was Harry.

Sheyna could see the embarrassed look on his face as he floundered like a fish out of water. She breathed a sigh of relief when she saw that he was starting to get the hang of it. She knew she had to get

him out of there and the person standing next to her was supposed to be where he was.

“Hey you!” She yelled at the bewildered Blitzer

“Yeah?” He asked

“You need to get to the stadium and hope that you’re not too late to save the game by halftime.” She told him before grabbing his arm and rushing back toward the stadium.

...

“You guys are persistent, kupo.” Said the moogle over his shoulder while running from Andrea. “I can’t believe you’d go through all this trouble for such a little box, well maybe it’s not little I did see that guy make it small somehow.” He started to fly higher and was starting to get out of her range. “Well it was fun but I have to be going now, bye kupo!”

“No you don’t.” Said Andrea. She tapped into all her junctioned strength and pushed herself off the ground and did a spectacular leap and landed on the roof where the moogle had been taunting her from.

“Oh kupo.” Cursed the moogle before taking off across the roofs of the buildings. Andrea tore after him and was steadily gaining on him. They ran across several buildings and Andrea was growing tired of this game. “Stop!” She said as she cast the Stop spell on the moogle. The creature slowed down gradually until it was at a standstill. Andrea walked over to it and plucked the trunk out of its hand. She then gave the creature a solid kick in the rear that would send it flying once its personal time restarted.

She jumped down from the roof and landed beside a screen that was playing the Blitzball game. She saw Harry on the field getting ready to face off with who she recognized as Bastian’s younger brother. She wondered how Harry had gotten into the Blitzball sphere and decided to go to the stadium and find out exactly what was going on. Besides that Harry was the only one who could open the trunk and she was sure that that’s where the Gil was.

...

In a seedy bar in the opposite side of the city a group of people wearing all black hooded cloaks and body suits sat around the table. The bartender was suspicious of the group but he didn't say anything for fear of his life. This group as well was watching the Blitzball game and they too recognized Harry, but unlike the girls they weren't concerned about how he got into the sphere or into the city for that matter. What mattered to them was that he was there and he was a target.

"Isn't that the offworlder?" Asked one of the Black Wings

"It looks like the photos we've seen." Said another one. "What do you think Leonheart?"

"I think you should stop talking to me and figure out a way to use this to our advantage." Said Leonheart

"Listen boy you may be the emperor's new favorite tool..." Started the first Black Wing but he was cut off when a gunblade was at his throat.

"I am no ones tool Nisan." Said Leonheart dangerously "I was put in charge of the operations here and I brought you two because you're supposed to be good at planning large scale attacks. However I could inform the emperor that you were 'killed in action' if you outlive your usefulness."

"No need to be so violent Antym." Said the other Black Wing "I've got just the plan. We were gonna release the fiends on the city anyway, why not call in one of our 'special' monsters to deal with the offworlder. The one I'm thinking of should have no problem capturing him."

"Just like your overgrown roach Ceil?" Asked Antym sarcastically "I was put in charge of this mission to see that things were done correctly. Now that the offworlder has been sighted he's our top priority."

“I’m sure you’ll agree with what I have planned once you see what we’ll use to procure the target.” Said Ceil

“You’d better hope so.” Said Antym

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Harry floated opposite a man with platinum blonde hair. He had a deep tan and a smirk on his face. “Where’d they pick you up?” Asked Davon “You look like you’ve never set foot inside a sphere.”

Harry didn’t answer he simply waited for the ball, which was in between the two of them to launch itself. When a loud buzzer sounded the ball shot into the air and Davon immediately dove up after it. Harry attempted to follow but his progress was still a bit sloppy. Being in zero gravity was an odd experience. Once Davon had the ball he tore down the sphere and headed in the direction of the Marlboros goal. He met immediate opposition in the form of Roland and wisely passed the ball to the Aurocs’ right forward. Craig carried the ball down the field and managed to slip through the rear defenders and get a clear shot at the goal. Klackon managed to block the shot and threw the ball to Jun. While his teammates played Harry was getting used to the environment. Slowly but surely the feeling of weightlessness became more and more natural and his instincts started to take over. It was almost like flying without a broom and he’d always been a natural at anything aerial anyway. When Jun was caught between the two opposing defenders and one of the forwards Harry rushed forward and knocked the two defenders out of the forward’s way. Jun gave him a nod before shooting the ball. The opposing goalie managed to block the shot and passed the ball back to Davon. The young center shot down the field and when he met opposition again instead of passing he kicked the ball extremely hard. It bounced off the head of Rixon and shot back towards Davon even faster. The center was undaunted and kicked the ball once again. This time it headed for Roland. The ronso tried to catch it but it was going too fast and he too was hit in the face with the ball. When the ball headed back towards Davon he twirled around to gain momentum before slamming the ball extremely hard with his foot and sending it streaming toward the goal. Klackon was too slow to block the ball and the buzzer sounded signaling a score.

The ball was placed in the face off area once more and this time Harry was the first to grab it. Once he had the ball he started heading toward the other team's goal. He didn't get far before he was grabbed from the side and thrown clear across the field. During this process the ball had been ripped from his hands and he hit the side of the sphere with a loud thunk. This got him angry. He figured if they were going to play like that then he'd play like that too. From that point on it was 'no more Mr. nice wizard' Harry didn't hesitate to ram into anyone in a yellow uniform that got in his way. He saw some interesting things throughout the next few minutes. Once Jun threw the ball at one of the forwards and it smacked him in the head. This wasn't the odd thing though. What was odd was the blue aura surrounding the ball and the fact that when the ball hit the forward she immediately fell asleep. No one had said anything about magic being legal in this game. Now that Harry knew that he was on another level altogether than the rest of the team. So far no one else had managed to score since Davon's first score. Harry raised his left hand and said "Accio Blitzball!" The ball was ripped out of Davon's hands and came speeding towards Harry. He caught it easily and discretely put a few charms on it. Maybe it was cheating but he'd never played the game before and no one seemed to care about anything else. When Harry shot the ball toward the goal it weaved and dodged around everyone who tried to stop it including the Aurocs' goalie, Grippa.

"What a shot!" Said Brad "That new guy looked sloppy at first but it appears to have all been an act, that kid is a natural if I ever saw one!"

"That's right Bradock the kid is rally something." Said Grisson "Let's see how the game will go now with 3:00 left in the first quarter."

Harry had placed a number of simple charms on the ball and when the face off came one of them activated. He'd charmed the ball to behave like a bludger and the results were very funny. When it was shot off the ball immediately sped toward Davon, the blitzer smirked when he caught the ball but it was immediately whipped away when the ball kept moving and took him with it. His teammates looked confused for a moment before he let go of the ball and it zoomed

around the field once more before stopping in front of Harry. Harry picked up the ball and headed back toward the goal. He lined up for another shot but the opposition wasn't going to make it easy for him. One of them grabbed him while another attempted to steal the ball away from him. Harry had to quell his instincts which were screaming at him to call his sword and turn the two defenders into scraps. "It's just a game no need to get all violent." He reprimanded himself. "I really need to practice Occlumency."

"So I keep reminding you." Said Seth "But do you ever listen to me? No!"

"Not now Seth." Said Harry mentally

"You'll wish you'd listened to me one day." Said Seth

"I'm going to practice I swear." Said Harry "It's just that I haven't really had the time."

Harry stopped the conversation when the defender that was holding him suddenly released him. He looked around and saw that Roland and Giro had come to his aid and now he had clear shot at the goal. He kicked the ball as hard as he could and Grippa just missed blocking the shot. The score was now 2 to one in favor of the Marlboros. The buzzer sounded and signaled the end of the first quarter. The team got a three minute break in which they stayed on the field and both teams went into a huddle.

"What the hell was that you did with the ball?" Asked Jun

"Yeah that was wicked man." Said Rixon

"I just improvised." Said Harry

"Scrawny man look pathetic in sphere at first." Said Roland "Roland not think he have any uses, Harry prove Roland wrong."

"Thanks I guess." Said Harry "This is actually kind of fun."

"Are you sure you've never played before?" Asked Giro

"You don't know the half of it." Said Harry "So what's the plan for the next quarter?"

"Basically don't let them onto our side of the field no matter what." Said Klackon "And shoot like crazy."

"Sure thing." Said Harry. He was really starting to like this game. There were hardly any restrictions on what you could do and the range of motion was amazing, the only drawback was that it could be downright dangerous. "What was that thing Dream did with the ball earlier?"

"That was the Tidus shot." Said Jun "Only the best players can do it and sadly no matter how hard I try I can't seem to get it down."

"It looks difficult." Said Harry "I hope he doesn't use it too many more times."

"Shot takes a lot out of user." Said Roland "Dream will only use shot when Dream has energy."

"Well that's encouraging." Said Harry

The second quarter started with Davon and Harry facing off once again.

"I don't know what you did to the ball last time." Said Dream "But your little tricks won't work again."

"Think so?" Asked Harry "We'll have to see about that, Accio Ball!" The spell was said just as the ball was released and the ball came straight to Harry. He was caught off guard when he was hit with a tackle from above and he felt his energy start to drain away.

"How do you like my Drain Tackle show off?" Said Davon "Let's see you use your little tricks now." He grabbed the ball from Harry's hands and headed toward the opposing goal. He once again performed the Tidus shot and once again he managed to score for his team bringing the game to a tie. The rest of the quarter progressed with Jun scoring

two more goals and Harry managing one more. For the other team Kung grabbed two goals and one of the defenders managed to score as well. The buzzer sounded for the half to end and the teams had a twenty minute reprieve from play.

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"That guy is actually pretty good." Said Robson from outside the stadium. "Coach probably won't let me play now."

Sheyna had been surprised when she saw Harry actually score. She'd seen him use some magic by summoning the ball to him and she suspected that he had done something to make it weave around like it had. "Even so we need to get him out and you in." Said Sheyna "What the hell were you doing away from the team on the day of a match that's this important?"

"Well..." Said Robson "I was um...I mean my girlfriend and I were...you know...doing the do."

"You were screwing around when you should have been practicing." Said Sheyna dryly "See this is why men are the lesser species."

"Hey!" Said Robson indignantly

"When you learn to think with the big head and not the little one then you can have something to say." Said Sheyna "Come on it's half time and we need to get inside."

They headed toward the doors to the stadium but a large well built bald man wearing dark glasses barred their path. "Tickets?" He asked threateningly.

"He's the center for the Marlboros." Said Sheyna

"And I'm a dancing Moomba." Said the man "No ticket no entry."

"Come on man you know I'm the real center." Said Robson

"No ticket, no entry." Repeated the guard more forcefully

"I've got my ticket right here." Said Robson pulling out a wad of money "See all these here 'tickets' can be yours if you let me in."

The guard took the proffered money and pocketed it. They waited for a moment before Sheyna finally spoke "Well?"

"No ticket, no entry." Said the guard

"You big hulking bastard!" Said Robson "Give me back my Gil!"

"What Gil?" Asked the guard "I don't see any Gil."

"Alright that's it." Said Robson. He swung at the guard who easily caught his fist and squeezed. The blitzer howled in pain as his hand was broken by the insanely strong man. "I don't have to take this crap!" Whined Robson "I'm going home I don't care if we win or not."

"Hey wait you big baby get your ass back here!" Yelled Sheyna

"Bite me bitch." He yelled back without turning around.

Sheyna didn't respond with words she simply sent a fire spell at his retreating backside causing his pants to catch on fire and him to dive off one of the riggings and into the water below in an attempt to put it out. "Jackass." She muttered

"Are you causing even more trouble?" Asked Andrea coming up the stadium stairs.

"And if I am?" Asked Sheyna "That guy deserved it anyway, he's lucky I didn't shoot him in the ass."

"So I assume you saw Harry on the spherecast?"

"Yeah" Answered Sheyna "Did you get the trunk?"

"Right here." Said Andrea throwing the trunk to Sheyna. "Now that he's in there we may as well find somewhere to wait until the game is over."

“That café across the street is showing the game.” Said Sheyna pointing across the street to a group of people who were crowded around a large sphere screen which was currently showing highlights from the first half of the game.

“Now we wait.” Said Andre as they made themselves comfortable by leaning against a wall that gave them a good view of the screen.

“I just hope he doesn’t somehow hurt himself.” Said Sheyna “He has a habit of doing that.”

“We’ll just have to hope for the best then.” Said Andrea

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In the Marlboro locker room Coach Wilham was livid. “How the hell could you let those pieces of shuupuff shit tie the game?” He roared “And you!” He said pointing to Harry who was once again reminded of his uncle “What the hell was that at the beginning can’t you fucking swim?”

“You’re lucky I’m even playing ass hole.” Said Harry “I’m not one of your paid players so I don’t have to take this shit from you. We’re tied not loosing just let us go out there and play and maybe we’ll come back with the win.”

“Listen you cocky little bastard.” Said Wilham softly but dangerously “I was blitzing when you were still a stain on your daddy’s underpants you hear me? I don’t care what you can do with a ball out there but when your in here wearing the uniform of MY TEAM you’ll show me some goddamn respect.”

“Don’t have a heart attack mate.” Said Harry nonchalantly “You’re the one who dragged me in here remember? I show respect to people who give it, I understand you want to win and that’s understandable, but you can’t just roar at me like that and expect me to jump to your every whim.”

“OUT, OUT, OUT ALL OF YOU GET YOUR ASSES BACK ON THE FIELD!” Roared Wilham. The team was more than happy to oblige and they headed back into the sphere.

The third quarter was completely a defense game by both teams. Neither of them managed to score a single goal on the other even when Harry used his ‘special techniques’ to control the ball. It seemed that the Aurocs had caught on to the fact that he had to use his hand in order to manipulate the ball and they didn’t give him the chance to do it properly there always seemed to be someone around when he tried to interrupt him. The fourth quarter was much more eventful in the scoring front. The first goal was made surprisingly by Klackon. He had just stopped a goal and instead of throwing the ball back in he kicked it as hard as he could and amazingly Grippa had been unable to block the incoming shot. Everyone missed the subtle push Harry had given the ball with his magic and he wasn’t about to take credit for it either. The next goal had been made by the only female in the game, Kung from the Aurocs. She had thrown the ball into the air and did a spinning dropkick on it that had sent it incredibly fast into the goal. The rest of the match progressed defensively until twenty seconds were left on the clock. The score was 6:6 and Dream had the ball. He started the maneuvers for the Tidus shot while Harry and Roland were guarding him. He kicked the ball and it bounced off Roland once again since the ronso just couldn’t seem to catch it when Davon used this technique. When he smacked the ball at Harry the wizard did a simple summoning charm on the ball before moving out of the way. The ball followed him to the other side of the field where he let the added momentum from Davon’s shot carry the ball at an incredible speed after him. He canceled the summoning charm when he was directly in front of the Aurocs’ goal and moved quickly out of the way. As the clock hit zero the ball hit the goal and the Marlboros managed to win the game 7:6. The crowd was silent for a moment before they broke into a resounding cheer.

“Well I’ve never seen a game quite like this Grisson.” Said Bradock
“The playing was superb by both teams and I can’t wait to see the action of the World Championships in three months.”

“Right you are Bradock.” Said Grisson “The teams will be leaving the sphere now to make their way to the trophy presentation in front of the stadium.”

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“Is it ready?” Asked Antym

“I’ve got it right here.” Said Ceil holding up a glass ball with a thick blue substance that had a fish swimming around in it inside. “This little baby may not look like much right now, but once this container breaks the fun will begin.”

“Let’s get started then.” Said Antym

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Harry floated in the middle of the sphere simply letting the exhaustion of the past few days take hold of him. He had felt a slight pain all through the game which he attributed to his mako poisoning and the constant physical exertion hadn’t helped at all. “Come on man we’ve got to go celebrate.” Called Giro

“I’ll be there in a minute.” Said Harry

“Suit yourself then.” Said Giro as he swam back towards the team entrance and left. Now Harry was the only player left on the field. The stands were still relatively full and the sphere cams were still rolling. Harry was now the center of attention and he could feel all the eyes in the stadium on him. Not liking the feeling he was about to head for the team entrance when he saw them lock themselves like they did during a game. He looked around nervously but no one seemed to notice anything. However people did notice when a glass sphere was shot out of one of the air ducts in the sphere and shattered upon hitting one of the walls. Slowly a blue liquid started to form into a gigantic sphere and Harry knew that something was terribly wrong. People started screaming in the crowd as the sphere started to grow as it seemed most of them recognized it for what it was.

"This isn't good." Commented Seth "That's a Greater Sphere if I'm not mistaken."

"And that means?" Asked Harry

"Immune to all physical attacks and absorbs almost any magic." Said Seth

"So how do I kill it then?" Asked Harry

"Good question." Said Seth "I wish I knew the answer."

"Oh bloody hell." Cursed Harry.

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As the match ended the girls watched Harry float in the middle of the sphere. Sheyna figured that he must have been in a lot of pain based on the way his eyes were glowing slightly from the mako. "What's that?" She heard Andrea ask and looked at the screen to see the cameral focusing on a small ball that was about to impact the wall of the sphere. When the glass shattered and liquid started to fill the sphere and form into a giant ball of living fluid. Sheyna recognized the creature immediately as a Greater Sphere and she knew Harry was in trouble.

"We've gotta get in there." She said to Andrea

"We've got our own problems." Said the SeeD "Look up there." She pointed into the sky and Sheyna saw several black airships with open hatches flying overhead. The ships each dropped numerous fiends from their hangers before flying out of sight over the horizon. These weren't your garden variety fiends either. They were amazingly strong fiends and some weren't even native to Spira. There were T-Rexaur which were basically dinosaurs which looked like their name sake, Belhemoths, Grats which were plant fiends which spit out a powder that put their prey to sleep, Flying eyeballs which were creatures with a huge single eye that made up almost their entire face and had large wings and a long tail. There were a host of other creatures of varying shapes and sizes but worst of all had to be the Marlboros. They were

plant like creatures which had many tentacles like legs which supported a huge head that held a large maw filled with sharp fangs which dripped with the creatures toxic fluids. These creatures were extremely dangerous because their Bad Breath attack caused its recipients to be afflicted with a deadly poison as well as being unable to cast magic and usually being induced with mind altering affects and blindness. All in all it was not an attack one wanted to be on the receiving end of.

“You have got to be kidding me.” Said Sheyna

“Looks like we’ve got our work cut out for us.” Said Andrea she cast Regen, Haste, Protect and Shell on herself and Sheyna and took a deep breath. “We should stick together; do you have a Heal Materia?”

“Yeah I’ve got one.” Said Sheyna she used it to cast a Resist spell on the both of them. The spell allowed the recipient to resist magical changes to their physical condition.

“I hope whatever Summon that is on your bangle is going to be useful.” Said Andrea before running off to engage a Belhemoth that had come close to the café. Sheyna was immediately at her side and the two began fighting for their lives.

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Harry was in a real predicament. The Greater Sphere was now about ten times his size and fortunately it had stopped growing. However now it was in aggressive mode and was firing Ice spells at Harry. The wizard tried a Thundaga spell on it since it appeared to be made of water, but this only seemed to make the creature stronger. It suddenly flattened itself out and surged forward hitting Harry and pressing him against the far wall of the sphere. So much pressure followed by the powerful impact caused the wizard a great deal of pain. The sphere started to coalesce around him and he felt himself being sucked in. Desperate he focused on his contain materia and tried the only spell he had yet to cast with it “Flare!” The spell took a considerable amount of magical power to cast but the results were most gratifying. The thing released him immediately and backed away after resuming its sphere shape. Harry focused on calling his

sword even though Seth had told him that physical attacks were useless against the creature Harry had an idea. Once his sword was in his hands he focused on a Flare spell once again but instead of releasing the spell he channeled it into his blade which ignited with the magical power of the Flare spell. He rushed the sphere and hacked at it with his sword. As he did so globs of gel flew from each cut and the creature seemed to vibrate with every blow. The fluid of the creature seemed to shimmer for a moment and suddenly Harry's strikes were no longer damaging it but making it stronger. With each strike it seemed to expand ever so slightly and Harry had to retreat once more or risk being sucked into the glob of a monster.

"What now?" Asked Harry to Seth

"The Flare Sword was a good idea, but now you need to find a new way to hurt it." Said the GF "Don't waste time trying to summon me just try and think of a way to hurt the thing."

"Easier said than done." Thought Harry "May as well try this the old fashioned way. Reducto!" The blasting hex was absorbed by the creature and the blue light of the spell seemed to multiply inside the liquid as the balls of light grew in number the creature suddenly released the balls and Harry was dodging his own spell frantically. "Okay Wizarding spells are a bad idea." He mentally chided himself.

"Seems so." Said Seth "See what spells you can draw from it."

Harry did so and saw that the thing had only water spells. He started to draw a Waterga spell and instead of stocking it he cast it on the creature. He was surprised when the spell actually hit it and caused some of it's mass to fall away. The creature shimmered again and Harry knew that he had to find another way to damage it now. The glob started to flatten out again and Harry hastily threw up a Protect spell to absorb some of the damage he knew was coming. Instead of the full body press as it had done last time the creature instead formed into a large cylinder and sent all it's force straight down at the wizard. The thing covered such a wide area that Harry was unable to dodge although he did try. He was pressed into the bottom of the sphere and he knew that he'd broken several bones in his back and ribs from the force of the blow. He realized that had it not been for the

Ultima junctioned in his core he would have surely been crushed. Wait Ultima he could use that to kill the creature!

“NO!” Hissed Seth “You are not ready to cast that spell and even if you were casting it in this state could kill you easily.”

Harry realized that Seth was right and as the creature started to draw him into itself once more Harry focused on his Restore Materia. He usually didn't use it because he had a large stock of Curaga spells, but he knew that the restorative spells within the orb were more powerful than junctioned spells. He cast a Curaga spell from within the orb and felt his energy start to return. He felt a wild surge of energy flowing within him and bursting to get out. He obliged it and let the feeling take him over. Suddenly he burst from out of the sphere and took a large amount of it's mass with him. Unlike in the mako cavern his sword didn't turn black. Instead it started to glow with white energy and Harry felt words spew from his mouth that he had no control over. “Shining Chaos!” He swung his sword in an arch and energy lanced around the entire sphere. The energy ran wild and the crowd which had been staring awestruck at the battle was even more shocked when the white energy suddenly returned to Harry's sword and he rushed the creature once again. He moved like a blur and slashed the creature right down the middle. His sword tore through the gel easily and half of the creature disintegrated as it separated from the main body.

The sphere backed away from the panting wizard quickly and reformed into a now much smaller version of it's former self. It was by no means small though as it was still about five times Harry's size. It capitalized on the wizard's fatigue and fired a barrage of fire spells. The spells all hit their mark and Harry's uniform was reduced to a charred mass of fabric. Thankfully for him all the fire did was cause some minor burns on his skin that a quick Cure spell took care of. Harry was thinking quickly of a way to end this battle. He'd used a lot of energy for that last attack and he was feeling a great deal of pain from his newly healed wounds and the mako running through his system. He wasn't going to let this thing beat him; he had too much at stake to loose. He shot a Freeze spell just as the monster was about to release another fire spell and the intense ice magic caused a part of the gel to freeze and shatter. The creature seemed to be very

angry about this, though it was hard to tell due to the lack of facial features. The only visible sign or agitation was the fish inside the creature which was swimming around frantically. The creature once again attempted to take Harry into it and the wizard was by now very angry. He was sick of this thing. He tapped into his energy reserves and forced them to flow like they had a few moments ago. He felt the raging power build and then he felt it bursting to escape. Once again he allowed it to flow. This time his blade became black once again and he felt words leave his lips. "Oblivion's Avatar!" He rushed the creature and slashed it relentlessly with dark energy. The creature was reduced to a single orb the size of a goldfish bowl and the small fish which swam around in the gel looked at Harry with fear in its aquatic eyes. The wizard didn't hesitate and hacked the thing in two. The remnants of gel around the sphere evaporated and all that remained of the sphere was a dissected fish which floated in the middle of the sphere. The last thing Harry heard before he blacked out was the roar of the crowd who were cheering his success in killing the creature. He was aware of the cheers of praise turning into screams of terror but he was too tired to care.

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The fiends were on an unstoppable rampage. It seemed that for every one the two women managed to defeat two more would take their place. They weren't the only ones fighting though. Quite a few of the people around them were using whatever limited magic and weapons at their disposal to combat the monsters. Currently Sheyna and Andrea were fighting a group of miniature dragons known as Drakes, they had thick scales that served as a natural armor and were prone to blasting large fireballs at their enemies, and a Marlboro. The latter was giving them a lot of grief because it kept emitting its toxins into the air and causing nearby people to start attacking each other and others to rush into a blind fury and attempt to slice or bludgeon the monsters depending on what weapon they had. Thanks to the resist spell all the toxins managed to do was give the duo a slight headache. Andrea dispatched one of the drakes by decapitating it neatly with her gunblade. Sheyna shot a demolition shell which hit one of the creatures in its open mouth just as it was about to launch a fireball. The result was a massive explosion which took out most of the nearby drakes and singed the Marlboro a bit.

Now that they only had the plant to worry about in the immediate area they converged on it, Andrea slashed at it mercilessly each time expertly timing her trigger depressions to achieve maximum damage. Meanwhile Sheyna used Firaga spells to further decimate the foul creature. Once they were done with the Marlboro and the Drakes they started to head back towards the stadium only to have a large group of flying eyeballs and a few T-Rexaur bar their way.

"I think it's time you used that summon." Said Andrea "Quazicotl won't do much against the T-Rexaur."

"I think you're right." Said Sheyna "This is going to take a lot out of me though." She took a deep breath and focused on the red orb in her bangle "Tsunami!" The two women were pulled into the gap between planes and a whirlpool of water surged around the area where they had been. A deep blue serpent started to form out of the water and when it was finished a one-hundred-foot-long sea serpent towered over the assembled fiends. It let out a shrieking cry and a massive tidal wave was conjured behind it. The Tsunami was about 200 feet tall and fifty feet wide. The devastating water attack crushed the fiends and pulled them into the water below the city. When the attack was over the serpent bowed to its summoner before disappearing. Sheyna and Andrea reappeared where they had been standing and before they could even take a breath Andrea was summoning Quazicotl. Once again they disappeared and the thunder bird screeched as it took to the sky. There had been a group of about six Marlboros approaching them from behind and Andrea had noticed them before Sheyna had summoned Leviathan. The lightning guardian made short work of the fiends and the two women once again reappeared and found a sea of fiend corpses all around them.

"I don't know if I can take much more of this." Panted Sheyna

"We have to keep going." Said Andrea "I don't know why there aren't any SeeD here they usually have heavy security during events like this."

"You'll have to ask when you get back to Garden then." Said Sheyna "Oh shit." She said as she saw yet another wave of fiends coming

their way. This time it was a group of Chimeras and some more flying eyeballs. "I don't think I can cast any more spells."

"I'm running low as well." Said Andrea as she cast a Cura spell on each of them followed by renewing their Haste, Protect and Shell spells. "I've got one thing that might help though."

"And that is?" Asked Sheyna

"Aura!" Cast Andrea on the both of them. They were surrounded by a golden glow and both women felt an extreme amount of energy bursting within them. Sheyna gripped a gun tightly in each hand and let her energy flow into the weapons she pointed the guns into the air above the fiends and said "Meteor Shot!" Magical energy lanced through the weapons and huge meteors rained down upon the fiends which were steadily coming forward. Andrea had a more head on technique though she took off in the opposite direction of Sheyna's attack and launched into her own Limit Break "Ranzokuken!" She said while pulling all her energy into her gunblade. The weapon seeped with power as she attacked at blinding speeds any fiend nearby blasting them apart with deadly precision and power. She continued in her stride steadily gaining power with each fiend she killed. When she felt her power reaching it's limits she jumped into the air and twirled her gunblade around her in a complete circle "Fated Circle!" She said and a flaming swath of energy tore through the fiends in the immediate area reducing them to cinders. They continued in this fashion for some time dispatching monster after monster using the power given to them by the Aura spell. Eventually though the spell ran it's course and it left both fighters completely exhausted. This was unfortunate though because there were only two of them and even with their combined efforts they had only managed to put a good dent in the fiends around the city.

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"How are things progressing Nisan?" Asked Antym

"Ceil's sphere didn't get the job done." Informed Nisan "The offworlder managed to beat it although it did take a lot out of him."

“Then why do we not have him in custody?” Asked the gunblader

“He is locked within the Blitzball sphere and we can’t get anything else in there. Someone’s locked us out of the system that we used to put the fiend in there.”

“And the attack on the city?” Asked Antym

“Mostly a success.” Said Nisan “The diversion in Trabia has kept SeeD busy and the pathetic Spiran militia didn’t know how to handle all the foreign monsters. Although we did meet two areas of heavy resistance.”

“Oh really?” Asked Antym raising an eyebrow although it couldn’t be seen due to his drawn hood.

“There were two women one with a gunblade and another with some guns and a lot of materia.” Said Nisan “Then there was an old man who somehow managed to kill every single fiend that came near him. He didn’t help anyone else like the women he just shot some weird green light at them and killed them.”

“What did the woman with the gunblade look like?” Asked Antym

“She had blonde hair and dark green eyes.” Said Nisan “The gunblade had a black blade and a silver trigger mechanism.”

“I see.” Said Antym “Well let’s end this attack now. We don’t want to destroy the whole city. Leave the offworlder for now, our main goal is done.” He walked to the hanger of the airship and it opened allowing him to see the city below. He raised his hand and said “Shockwave Pulsar!” A huge creature with black fur covering it’s entire body appeared in the sky. It had black wings which had a span twice as wide as it was tall and it had vicious claws on each hand. Silver hair grew down it’s back and it had a lion like quality to its entire being. The creature raised both hands into the air and every fiend in the city was engulfed in a silver-purple light and raised into the air. Dark energy swirled around the floating balls and a sizzling sound could be heard all around. The attack lasted several minutes and when it was done no fiends remained in the city. Antym smirked as the guardian

disappeared and he closed the hanger as his airship headed east back towards Baron. The attack had done exactly what the emperor had intended and spread fear of the power of the Black Wings and the new Baron Empire. He didn't care about that though because he wasn't following the emperor's orders he was only allowing the man to think that he did. He served a far greater power than the emperor and she was the one whose pleasure concerned him.

...

Andrea lay on the ground tired from so much energy being used at one time. She'd seen the beast in the sky eradicate the fiends and its presence in the city worried her greatly. There was only one reason for that GF to be present in the city and that was if its junctioner was nearby. She'd seen the airships flying around and knew that they were Black Wing vessels. The creature had been summoned from one of the ships that much she could tell so any doubts about whether or not Antym was a traitor vanished from her mind. That beast had been Griever and it appeared to be in the control of the Black Wings. Several things raced through her mind at this thought, the most prevalent of which were "Where the hell were the other SeeDs?" A nearby screen which was still showing the inside of the Blitzball sphere caught her attention and she turned her head in its direction and heard Harry's voice over the broadcast "Oblivion's Avatar!" She saw him make quick work of the sphere and sighed in relief since she knew that he was alright. She didn't know why she cared what happened to him but in the short time she'd known him he was beginning to grow on her. She wasn't about to compromise her duty for him but she didn't want to see him hurt at least. With these thoughts she slowly blacked out knowing that things were getting a lot more complicated.

Bessaid Garden

Harry was getting used to waking up in pain. The last time this had happened was during one of the digs back on Bikinel Island. He felt something soft underneath of him and when he tried to move he found that he was bound. He wondered about this as the last thing he remembered was fighting that damned liquid monster. He felt he could die a happy man if he never saw one of those again. He briefly wondered what the screams at the end of his battle had been about. He hoped the girls were alright and that one of them had caught the real moogle and gotten his trunk back. That thing contained his only connection to his home and he'd be devastated if he lost it. He was in pain but he felt that his injuries were healed so he attributed this to the excess mako in his system. He slowly opened his eyes and shut them again almost immediately. All he saw was a harsh white light shining in his eyes. He groaned aloud and heard a shuffling in the room beside him. He opened his eyes hesitantly and the light had been dimmed some. He looked around to see that he was in a room with nothing but four blank black walls and a ceiling made entirely of a white light.

"You're awake." Said a man's voice from somewhere in the room. It was deep and held a purely business like tone. "You put on quite the show during the game and after it. Do you know that not everyone can defeat a Greater Sphere in a group let alone on their own after playing a grueling game of Blitzball and being afflicted with mako poisoning?"

"You seem to be well informed." Said Harry dryly "Mind telling me why I'm tied down?"

"Merely a safety procedure Mr. Potter." Said the man coming into Harry's view. He was middle aged and wore thin wire framed glasses which sat in front of two blue-grey eyes. He had dark black hair that hung down to his shoulders with streaks of silver in it. The man was built very well and Harry could tell that his crisp navy blue uniform hid a considerable amount of muscle mass. "People with as much power as you seem to have can't be aloud to simply walk around without proper supervision."

"I take it SeeD has me then?" Asked Harry already knowing the answer thanks to the man's uniform which held the SeeD emblem over the heart and three bars with a silver 'A' in between them.

"I think you can figure that one out." Said the man "Now I'm going to ask you a few questions."

"And if I don't feel like answering any?" Asked Harry

"This cell has many different security measures." Said the man "We can leave you in here as long as we want in total darkness with no food, water and barely enough air circulation to keep you from dying and you'd never be able to get out."

"Don't let him intimidate you." Said Seth "It's against their protocol to do things like that it couldn't have changed that much."

"You're bluffing." Said Harry "And even if you aren't I don't think you're even sure if this cell could hold me."

"Are you willing to take that chance?" Asked the man "You'd have to fight through 200 mercenaries who are trained to kill the most powerful fiends and people in the world and all stocked with some of the most dangerous magic on the planet. I don't think it would be wise to press your luck."

"He has a point there." Said Seth "They wouldn't hesitate to kill you if you tried to get out of here."

"You do realize that you aren't really helping right?" Asked Harry mentally but he got no response. "I'd be willing to risk it if you try to keep me here against my will. I haven't done anything wrong and I'm under no obligation to answer anything from you."

"What you've done or haven't done isn't the issue here." Said his captor "What we want to know is what your people will do when they get here."

"So you convinced that the world is going to merge again?" Asked Harry

"The pattern fits." Said the SeeD "You're an offworlder and when people like you start to show up the world starts to change, and based on what we know of you since you've been here I'd say that we have a cause to be concerned."

"How about we compromise then?" Said Harry "I answer a question for you and you answer a question for me."

"That sounds reasonable." Said the man "Although I can't say I'll be able to answer all your questions."

"Just be honest." Said Harry "And I'll do the same."

"Agreed." Said the man "Now how did you get here?"

"I'm not really sure." Said Harry truthfully "I was running for my life one minute and the next I was in a strange desert with two suns."

"Alright your turn." Said the man

"Who are you?" Asked Harry

"I am Commander Raynor SeeD A-Class and leader of Bessaid Garden." Said the commander "What are your intentions here?"

"I just want to find a way to get back home." Answered Harry "My turn, can you please untie me?"

"No." Said the commander "Next question, would your world pose a threat to ours?"

"Possibly." Said Harry shortly "Where am I now?"

"You are in a holding cell inside Bessaid Garden." Answered Raynor "What kind of threat could your world pose to us?"

"There are some very evil people in my world that would use the magic of this one in order to conquer their adversaries and spread

chaos and destruction for their own sick pleasure.” Said Harry grimly
“Where are Sheyna and Andrea?”

“Miss Pride is now in her quarters inside this garden and your friend is being held in a cell like yours.” Said Raynor “What were you doing in Moonflow?”

“Just passing through.” Said Harry “Why is Sheyna locked in a cell?”

“She made some protests about our treatment of you and was highly vocal.” Said Raynor “What is in the trunk you were in possession of.”

“Do you have it?” Asked Harry

“You haven’t answered my question yet.” Said Raynor

“That information is on a need to know basis and frankly you don’t need to know.” Said Harry getting riled up at the man’s trivialness.
“Do you have it?”

“That information is classified.” Said the commander evenly

“Fine I was making a delivery.” Said Harry

“Delivery of what?” Asked the commander

“You haven’t answered my question yet.” Said Harry angrily

“On the contrary.” Said Raynor “I told you the information was classified and you volunteered the information about the trunks contents.”

“Bastard.” Muttered Harry “That information is between me and my customers.” Said Harry

“So it was a group then?” Said Raynor

“What?” Asked Harry

“You said it was between you and your customers therefore implying that there was more than one.” Answered Raynor “So who was the delivery to.”

“It’s not your question yet.” Said Harry indignantly

“You asked what I meant by my statement and I answered you; now who was the delivery to?”

“Sheyna’s mother.” Said Harry “We were heading to Bevelle

“Funny I was given the impression you were heading to Lucca.” Said Raynor

“You heard wrong then.” Said Harry

“According to Pryde you had a delivery to a client in Lucca and because of your connection from the S.S. Pumice you decided to stick together for mutual survival.”

“I was just trying to throw her off.” Said Harry “I didn’t want to make an enemy of her because I knew she was a SeeD and that she had saved my life recently I felt I owed it to her to help her complete part of her mission even though it would set Sheyna and I back a bit.”

“How noble of you.” Said the commander “People like you don’t come along very often, and when you do you’re usually the first to die.”

What’s that supposed to mean?” Asked Harry heatedly.

“You needlessly put yourself on the line and that is a liability to your own well being and the well being of whatever goal you are currently aimed at.” Said Raynor “How do you open the trunk?”

“It’s still my question.” Said Harry

“If this process is too taxing on your brain Mr. Potter we can try a different approach.” Said the man condescendingly “You asked me what I meant by a comment and I answered you.”

"Goddamnit." Harry thought "I'm falling right into his traps and word games. I can't keep letting him manipulate me."

"Again another reason why you should practice Occlumency." Commented Seth "Legilimancy as well since it would help in this situation."

"Thank you Seth for your great words of wisdom." Said Harry sarcastically "Like I'd tell you."

"We have ways of making you talk Mr. Potter." Said Raynor evenly

"I don't care what you do to me." Said Harry "Threatening me won't make me cooperate."

"I see." Said Raynor "That's a shame though because until I know what I want I'm afraid you'll be enjoying this room for quite some time."

"Fine by me." Said Harry "You can't hold me forever though."

"You may be right." Said Raynor "But you can't stop us from trying."

...

Harry was left in the cell for another six hours before anyone came back in and then it was only someone pouring water over his face. He got what refreshment he could from that and before he could say anything or even breath properly for the first time in minutes an Elixir was all but shoved down his throat. The person then left the room.

"They must have you listed as a class A prisoner." Said Seth

"What's a class A prisoner?" Asked Harry

"The second highest prisoner rank for SeeD." Said Seth "You are in the deepest part of the Garden and have twenty four hour surveillance and at least two armed guards stationed outside your cell."

"I see I am very liked." Said Harry "Did they have to douse me with the water though."

"Their trying to break you in the most humane way possible." Said Seth "They do have something similar to your Verituserum. If they use that there would little you could do, but if you had practiced..."

"Yes Seth practice Occlumency." Said Harry "I'll start now since I've got nothing better to do." He closed his eyes and focused on contacting the magical center of his mind. He felt his awareness shift inward and slowly eased into his mind. Harry had never experienced this level of Occlumency before but he was aware of particularly strong wizards and witches being able to do so. He found himself in a room with many doors. Through many of the doors he found file cabinets with papers haphazardly stuffed within. Each door had a label on it. There was one labeled Dursleys, another labeled Hogwarts. Each of his friends had a door as well. Ron, Hermione, Ginny, Neville and even Luna. There was one labeled parents, another said Sirius while a different one said Dumbledore. It seemed everyone he'd ever met or every significant place in his life had a door for them, there was such minor acquaintances like people he knew in primary school and people he hated like Malfoy, Snape and Voldemort. He saw a two hallways branching off from the room too. One said Junctions and the other was blocked off heavily and said Forms above it. Harry would have to find out exactly what was through that way. He figured that his mind was this organized because he had practiced Occlumency a bit and had made categories for his memories, but hadn't sorted them out yet. He looked up and realized that anyone would be able to come into his mind and find something easily with the way things were currently. He focused on the doors and willed them to have several locks and security spells that would allow only him through any of them. Then he made it so the signs were only visible to him and he also put some anti personnel traps proximity mines and hidden pits that would trap someone in his mind until he wanted to let them out. He marveled at how easy it was for him to organize his mind's defenses and wondered why it couldn't have been this easy back home.

"That would be because of the magical abundance of this world." Said Seth coming from the entrance of the Junctions path.

"I hope the filing is this easy." Said Harry

"I wouldn't count on it." Said Seth "The memories won't bend to your will like the rest of your mind will."

"I suppose not." Said Harry "I guess I'll take a look at the Junctions path now."

"Be my guest." Said Seth "After all it is your mind."

They walked down the tunnel and shortly came into another large room. This one contained alters along the walls and each one burned a different color. Some of the flames appeared to be made of ice while others appeared to be made of lightning. Some looked like Cure spells and another looked like the aura from a haste spell. Harry realized that this must be his magic which was stocked within him. He saw one spell that looked like white hot green fire and he immediately knew what it was, Ultima. The flame burned brightly and Harry saw that its energy was siphoned into canals which redirected it to other parts of his body. He noticed that a few of the other spells had the same things running along the bases of their alters. Harry saw another spell sitting off by itself and this one was pure white with a hint of silver around the edges. He promptly knew it for what it was, Holy. The spell wasn't junctioned to anything at present and Harry wanted to know if there was somewhere where it would be useful. "Seth why isn't this one junctioned?"

"I hadn't really thought of a decent place to use it with what I can do with it." Said the Guardian

"What do you mean?" Asked Harry

"I can only help you regulate a certain amount of magic and only to a few different places." Explained the serpent "If you want more options get more GF."

"I can have more than one?" Asked Harry

"Of course." Said Seth. "As many that are willing to take up residence in your mind, although most don't like it if it gets too crowded in here and some of them won't junction anyone if they have junctions already."

"Picky bunch aren't you?" Asked Harry

"Only the vain ones." Said Seth "Most know their own limitations and don't attempt to perpetrate being able to do any more than they are able to."

"Well since you've got this under control where should I head next?"
Asked Harry

"I would go to the bonds chamber." Said the serpent

"I don't recall seeing that." Said Harry "Just this one and one called 'Forms.'"

"Look again." Said Seth "It's there."

Harry returned to the main chamber and looked once again. All he saw in any direction was doors and a passage which was blocked off by several iron gates and a heavy wooden door. His gaze settled on the door labeled Voldemort. When he approached it he saw the wall between the doors for Voldemort and Dumbledore spread out and another passage opened up. Above the passage the word 'Bonds' was printed. He walked into the chamber and saw a room which had two gates which blocked passages. One of them was labeled Voldemort and its gate had some holes in it but otherwise looked intact. He also noticed a few things set into the wall that looked like candle holders. They each had a name above them and some were lit while others weren't. The names said: Peter Petigrew, Ginevra Weasley, Sirius Black, Hermione Granger, Neville Longbottom, Luna Lovegood and Arthur Weasley. Harry wondered about these before he saw words printed above the candles, Life Debts. The ones that weren't lit were all those debts that no longer applied, Hermione, Sirius and Mr. Weasley. He didn't remember Mr. Weasley ever repaying his debt, not that he held it against the man of course. It was then that he realized what this must mean. Arthur Weasley's debt no

longer applied because he was dead. This information pained him greatly and he couldn't help but wonder who else was dead in his world.

The next gate said Seth and Harry wondered about this. The second gate opened and the serpent entered the room. "This keeps your mind from being overloaded by my own." Explained the guardian "If it were ever ruptured you would most likely go insane from the collision of consciousnesses."

"I see." Said Harry "Is there any way to open the gate to Voldemort?"

"I do not know." Said Seth "You are my first junctioner and I am learning as I go. Your mind is also very complex because of your 'uniqueness'."

"At least you didn't call it an abnormality." Said Harry

"If you ever see those people again you should consider evisceration as a possible attitude adjustment technique." Said Seth

"I should say that that's a horrible thing to say, but I happen to agree with you." Said Harry "Not that I'd ever do it, fortunately for them."

"You should probably wake up now." Said Seth "You have a visitor."

...

Harry returned to the waking world to see Andrea standing in front of his holding table. She had the usual neutral mask on her face although Harry thought he saw something else in her eyes, concern?

"I guess you did what you had to do." Said Harry

"I didn't have much of a choice actually." Said Andrea "They already had you on board Garden and when they asked me questions I answered honestly. You were in the infirmary until they found out about you being from another world and all. Then the commander decided that you were too much of a danger to be left in such an insecure environment."

"I suppose I should be flattered then?" Asked Harry attempting some morbid humor. "So why are you here?"

"They seem to believe that you'll cooperate better with me than you did with the commander." Said Andrea

"I'm not telling you what I was carrying in the trunk and I am not telling you how to open it, not that you could." Said Harry

"So what will you tell me?" Asked the SeeD.

"I'll tell you about me." Said Harry "And that will tell you all you need to know about what to expect when and if my world merges with this one."

"I'm listening." Said Andrea

"I won't start until you untie me." Said Harry

"Can't do that." Said Andrea

"Then I can't talk." Said Harry resolutely

"Too bad then." Said Andrea "If you had cooperated we could've arranged some kind of compromise."

"All I want is to be untied." Said Harry "You people are treating me like I'm some kind of dangerous criminal or something."

"How do we know you aren't a dangerous criminal?" Said Andrea "We know nothing about you, so how can we be certain you aren't a threat to our world?"

"I see your point." Said Harry "If I answer your questions do you swear on your honor as a SeeD that you'll at least untie me?"

"I swear on my honor as a SeeD." Said Andrea

"Alright here goes nothing." Said Harry "I was born seventeen years ago at the height of a war in my world..." So he told her all about himself not leaving much of anything out. He didn't go into detail he simply told them what he felt they needed to know. He told her about Voldemort killing his parents and the prophecy as well as the Wizarding world and whatever history he could remember from the Muggle world. He explained about Hogwarts and a few of his many adventures while attending there and even about the Horcruxes. He figured if they ever had to deal with Voldemort then these were things that they needed to know. He ended his story with what happened in the catacombs under the cathedral and how he'd suddenly teleported into the middle of a desert. "And that's about it for what's going on in my world. For all I know everyone I care about could be dead and I know for a fact that one of them already is."

"That's quite a tale." Said Andrea "I'm going to untie you now, try anything and I'll use any means necessary to subdue you." She walked over to what appeared to be a blank wall and depressed a hidden switch which caused Harry's binds to loosen and he got off the bed stumbling slightly due to lack of use from his legs. He looked himself over and saw that he was no longer wearing the ruined Blitzball uniform. Instead he now sported a set of blue overalls which reminded him a a prison uniform.

"How long was I on that thing?" He asked

"You were out for a week before you woke up and talked to the commander." Said Andrea "Then you were asleep for a whole day before I came in."

"I was out for that long?" He thought

"Yes and it would have been longer if it hadn't been for the mako in your blood." Said Seth "Although that is going to be getting very uncomfortable soon."

"You're just a wealth of good news aren't you?" Said Harry sarcastically "So what now?"

"Now we review the information you gave us and see if you were lying." Said Andrea "If we think you were we'll be back with something to ensure your honesty."

"How's Sheyna?" He asked

"She seems to be very angry with us for locking her in a cell." Said Andrea "Although it's her own fault. We gave her fair warning to not try anything stupid; she tried to break you out."

"Why the hell would she try to do something like that?" Asked Harry

"I'd imagine because she's your friend and she doesn't like the way we're treating you." Said Andrea "But it's only a guess."

"People need to stop putting themselves in danger for me." Said Harry

"You can't control what other people do." Said Andrea "We'll probably let her out again, although I don't think she'll be seeing her materia or weapons anytime soon." With that she left Harry in the room alone with his own thoughts. Why would the stupid girl try to break him out? What the hell could she think she would be able to do against a whole battalion of SeeDs?

"You would've tried it." Said Seth "If one of your friends was in danger you'd try to save them, I've seen it in your mind."

"Still she hardly knows me." Said Harry

"You hardly knew Hermione when you tried to save her from the troll." Said Seth "You didn't know Sheyna, Bastian and Sophia when you ran into the ruins to save them, you didn't know-"

"I get it!" Said Harry exasperatedly "I still think it was a stupid thing to do."

"What will you do now?" Asked the guardian

“I’ll practice Occlumency for the moment.” Said Harry. He sat back onto the medical table and crossed his legs so that he was sitting Indian style. He concentrated and delved back into his psyche.

...

The next few days past in much the same way. Harry would get a meager meal of some sort which gave him just enough strength to get by and he’d spend the rest of his time in his own mind. He had learned from Seth how to allocate his magic and had readjusted some of it to help protect him from some of the nastier ailments of this world. He junctioned the pain spell he’d drawn from Seth so that it would prevent poisoning, magic binding and blindness. His strength and vitality seemed to be well augmented by the Ultima spell so he left that alone. He wanted to set up some elemental defenses like Andrea had, but Seth said he was unable to help him with that so he’d need to find another GF that could. His memory organization was a long and tedious process. He had to go through every single file and there were such trivial things like remembering seeing Tonks break something when she tripped to important things like when Voldemort and Dumbledore dueled in the Ministry of Magic. As tiresome as it was it did give him a chance to pass the time. He was realizing something that he hadn’t thought about before and he asked Seth about it.

“Didn’t Bastian say that GF’s caused memory loss?” He asked

“Normally yes.” Said Seth “But since you already had a slightly organized mind your memories should be safe. You may want to put safeguards on them to make sure they don’t get thrown aside when you junction another guardian.”

“I’ll do that.” Said Harry “I don’t know where I’m going to get another GF though.”

“You’re in a garden where almost everyone is junctioned to one.” Said Seth “All you have to draw one when you get ready to leave.”

“I don’t want to steal anything and give them a reason to lock me up.” Said Harry “If they treat me like this when I haven’t even done

anything, I'd hate to see what they do to me if I give them a reason to punish me."

"So don't get caught." Said Seth

"You make it sound so easy." Said Harry

"If I can break out of a garden then so can you." Said the serpent

"You weren't a Class A prisoner either were you?" Said Harry

"Nope." Said Seth "Last time they caught me I was a Class S."

"How the hell did you get out then?" Asked Harry

"It was a very interesting experience." Said Seth "It involved hostages, gunblades and setting every monster in the training center loose. Not to mention a very pissed off sorceress."

"Umm." Said Harry "I don't think I'll need to do all that."

"It was just a suggestion." Said Seth "Although you do need to get out of here soon. They don't seem to want to give you the counteragent to the mako and it's already been about three weeks since you were poisoned."

"I can tell by the pain that racks my body almost constantly when I'm not in here." Said Harry "At least I'm not tied down anymore."

"You should wake up again." Said Seth "You've got company and I think they're going to let you out."

...

Harry pulled out of his mind and saw three people standing around him. Andrea, Commander Raynor and the man that had ran into him on the docks.

"We've reviewed the story you told us and based on your body's reaction to what you were saying we assume that you are either

telling the truth or know how to control your body's reaction to lying.” Said Raynor “We are going to remove you from this cell and take you to the infirmary where you will be given a small dose of mako counteragent.”

“How kind of you.” Said Harry “And what then? Going to chuck me back into my cage?”

“You will show the commander some respect freak!” Said the red haired man.

Harry flinched at the word ‘freak’ and was desperately trying to quell his rising temper. “He’s not my commander and if you value your sorry arse then don’t ever, and I mean ever call me a freak again.” He said in a deadly quiet whisper that echoed through the room. The man was about to rush Harry but Raynor held him back.

“Stand down Dincht.” Said Raynor “I’m not his commander and his question does have merit.”

“Dincht that explains so much.” Said Seth

“I’d ask you to elaborate but I know you won’t.” Said Harry

“No I won’t.” Said Seth

“So what are you going to do after I leave the infirmary?” Asked Harry again

“You’ll be given room in the guest quarters and restricted access to the garden’s facilities.” Said Raynor “Mr. Dincht here will show you to your quarters and Miss Pryde will be your escort while you are here.”

“What about Sheyna?” Asked Harry

“If she agrees not to cause anymore disruptions we’ll let her out as well.” Said Raynor “You will have access to the cafeteria, infirmary, training center and your quarters. All of these are located on the first level and access to any other facilities is prohibited. Break any of these rules and you’ll find yourself in a worse cell than this one.”

"How long are you going to keep me here, and why are you holding me in the first place?" Asked the wizard

"We aren't certain yet." Said Raynor "I would try to make myself comfortable though."

Harry sighed in resignation. At least they were letting him out of the cell for the time being and he'd worry about getting out later. For now he'd take the opportunity to rest and get treated for the mako.

"I suppose I'll cooperate for now." Said Harry "Like I said before though you can't hold me forever." And he knew they couldn't if worse came to worse he'd try and appearate and worry about the consequences later.

Dincht showed him to his quarters and where the cafeteria and training center were located before taking him to the infirmary. The structure of the garden was circular and each section had its own passageway which were spaced around a large central column. The column contained an elevator and some rooms which Harry felt didn't concern him since he was restricted and wasn't going to be getting used to this place anyhow. His cell had been located under the central column and they'd taken the elevator up.

Now he sat in the infirmary waiting for a doctor to stick a very large needle into his arm. "This may sting a bit." Said the doctor, a bald headed man with a brown beard and mustache. He stuck the needle into Harry's left arm and the wizard bit down a cry. It felt like someone was driving a drill through his arm and then pumping it full of acid. This man's idea of 'a bit' was in serious need of adjustment. After about two minutes the process was over and Harry felt the constant pain lessen considerably, although he could still feel a slight ache throughout his body.

"So I'm cured now?" He asked hopefully

"No." Said the doctor "Mako is a strange substance, once it's in you it's in you and that counteragent only acts as a stabilizer which allows your body to adjust to the new substance, You'll need a few more

doses of that in order to complete the process but that was enough to get it started.”

“So I’m stuck with it?” Asked Harry forlornly

“I’m afraid so.” Said the doctor “Although it won’t be that bad once your body assimilates it. What did you do drink the stuff? Your blood is pretty saturated with it.”

“I was bleeding pretty badly when I was close to a big pool of it.” Said Harry “Although I was told that it was only slight poisoning.”

“No your case was pretty severe.” Said the doctor “I’m surprised you could even function with that amount in your system.”

“I wonder why Claire said it was only slight.” Thought Harry

“She is probably the one that told the Black Wings about you being an offworlder.” Said Seth “She was the only wild card since you knew the least about her. If she wanted to make it easier for them to catch you all she had to do was misinform you in the hopes that the mako would slow you down.”

“You don’t really think she did that do you?” Asked Harry

“I would have never trusted her.” Said the serpent “She wasn’t forthcoming with information and she asked you quite a lot of questions about your world. You can’t trust everyone blindly and expect nothing like this to happen.”

“I had been worried about that, but I had just hoped.” Thought Harry “So doctor...? Wait what’s your name?”

“Dr. Akanowi.” Said the doctor

“Yeah, so has the mako done any damage then?”

“Nothing life threatening.” Said Akanowi “It has gotten deep into your system though, if you’d have waited any longer to get a dose of counteragent I’m sure your body would’ve started to mutate.”

"What should I expect now?" Asked Harry

"Well we gave you a dose of counteragent when we found out your condition and one now, so after about 2 more doses over the next month and you should have assimilated all the mako into your cells." Said Akanowi. "When this happens you can expect better vision, hearing and smell as well as a boost in your physical strength and endurance."

"Wow." Said Harry "That seems too good to be true."

"Mako poisoning of your level hasn't been seen for quite some time." Said Akanowi "Records indicate that excessive mako exposure can cause mind altering effects."

"So I'll go crazy?" Asked Harry worriedly

"Well..." Said Akanowi hesitantly "...Nothing's solid..."

"You don't know." Said Harry solemnly

"I only have a few cases to base it on...and all of them don't end well." Said the doctor

"So how many do end well?" Asked Harry not really wanting to hear the answer.

"Out of the ten cases on record including yours..." Said the doctor contemplating "...You'd be the only one."

Harry just started laughing and the doctor was taking aback. The wizard just laughed humorlessly his eyes glowing slightly. Then as quickly as it started the laughter stopped. Harry sat silently as the doctor removed the shot from his arm and didn't do anything but stare at the wall in front of him. He was almost clinically assured that he was going to lose his mind from an overdose of some weird toxin.

"Well you can return to your quarters now Mr. Potter." Said Dr. Akanowi

Harry rose from the table and walked out of the room. Dincht had disappeared and Andrea stood leaning against a wall. He also saw Sheyna and nodded to her. She smiled in reply and stepped forward to greet him more warmly but Harry kept walking and didn't acknowledge either of them again. He headed toward the training center and as soon as he was there the fiends inside turned to greet him. He summoned his sword from wherever the SeeDs had stashed it and started making mincemeat out of the Grats that populated the area. Eventually he ran into some Drakes and they too felt his frustration. He was a fiend killing machine chopping, burning, freezing and generally plain obliterating anything in his path. More than a few SeeDs had to jump out of the way to avoid being hit by a stray spell or flying monster body part. He did sustain a few injuries but a quick Curaga took care of almost everything. When he'd completed one circuit of the training path he left towards his quarters leaving a number of shocked faces behind him.

...

This continued for the next week. Harry would wake up, eat a quick breakfast in the cafeteria and then go into the training center. Ten hours later he'd emerge and return to his room where he'd work on organizing his mind for a few hours before eating a quick dinner and catching a few hours sleep. Andrea and Sheyna had tailed him the first few days, but after seventy-two hours of being ignored the raven haired girl couldn't take it and stalked off in a huff. Andrea simply regarded Harry with her usual neutral expression and even fought in the training center with him from time to time.

After the first week of his semi-freedom he was called into the commander's office.

"Hello Mr. Potter." Said Raynor with the same neutral tone as always "I see you have been spending a great deal of time in our training center."

"You don't really give me many options of ways to occupy my time." Said Harry biting

"I see your point." Said Raynor "We're in the process of working something out that you may find appealing, but you'll need to give us some time to work out exactly what it would entail."

"Is that all?" Asked Harry

"One more thing." Said Raynor "You are no longer aloud in the training grounds."

"Why?" Asked Harry

"You've been very disruptive to the cadets that are going to be taking their SeeD exams soon." Said the commander "I can offer you a substitute though. For our more extreme trainers we have a simulator designed to produce some of the toughest opponents imaginable."

"It's either that or stay in my room and sulk." Said Harry "I think you know what my answer is."

"Miss Pryde must accompany you into the simulator at all times." Said Raynor

"She follows me anyway." Said Harry "She even fights sometimes."

"Well it shouldn't be a problem then." Said Raynor "You have to got through the normal training area to get to the simulator, any monsters that are stupid enough to get in your way are free game."

"Thanks I suppose." Said Harry "Are you planning to ever give me back my trunk?"

"Are you going to decide to tell us what's in it?" Asked the commander

"I see then." Said Harry "Have a good day Commander Raynor."

When Harry was heading back to his quarters he found his door blocked by Sheyna who was standing there with a deep frown on her face.

"What the hell is your problem?" Asked Sheyna bluntly "You haven't said a word to me since before we split up in Moonflow and now you run around killing anything that gets in your way."

"It's my problem and I'll deal with it." Said Harry "You shouldn't worry about me, people that do always end up hurt."

"Don't give me that crap." Said Sheyna "Do you know what I've done for you? I don't think you fully grasp the extent of the trouble I could be in here. Everything is not always about you."

"I never said it was." Said Harry getting angry

"Well you act as if everything revolves around you, your problems are so much more important than everyone else's." Shot back Sheyna "All you've done is mope around here like that will solve all your problems, well guess what it won't"

"Don't act like you can understand me." Growled Harry

"How can I understand you when you don't let anyone know what goes on in that thick head of yours?" Jeered Sheyna

"So you want me to 'talk about it.'" Said Harry mockingly "Talking doesn't solve your problems either."

"Works better than moping around like some kind of zombie." Said Sheyna "I don't even know why I bother."

"Me either." Said Harry "I'm not worth it."

"Why do you think you have no worth?" Asked Sheyna "Everyone has the right to want someone to worry about them."

"Not when it gets you killed." Said Harry "Since you've met me you've been in dangerous situation after dangerous situation and now look where I've got you? Held captive with me in a moving fortress."

"It was my choice to make." Said Sheyna "When I met you, you were a bloody mess and you didn't have a friend in the world, literally, so I

take you in, help you get back on your feet and even get you a job and show you how to use this world's magic. What do I get in return? The cold ass treatment. I'm your friend Harry I worry about you, accept it because weather you like it or not I'm going to try and help you."

Harry was touched by her words, but he wasn't going to back down so easily "I appreciate what you've done Sheyna." Said Harry "I would have died if you hadn't pulled me out of that desert, but I've messed your life up enough already."

"Despite all the danger that's come from being around you, I've had fun." Said Sheyna "You're an interesting person Harry and there's just something about you that draws people to you. I'm going to help you however I can, not because you asked me to or because I want something in return, but because I want to and I know that it's the right thing to do."

"Don't be so sure." Said Harry "I didn't want to tell you this but I suppose you of all people have a right to know." He looked around and saw that their argument had drawn quite the crowd. Andrea stood off to the side and simply nodded to him when he caught her eye. "Let's go in here it will be a bit less crowded." He opened his room door and they went inside.

It was a simple room with a bed, desk and bathroom. The walls were bare and a steel grey color which gave the room an emotionless feel to it. Sheyna sat on the bed and Harry remained standing and started to pace the room. "You know Claire lied about how bad my poisoning was?" He started "She had to have known it was bad and she didn't bother to tell me exactly how bad because I think she wanted the Black Wings to catch me while I was weak."

"No she couldn't be!" Said Sheyna shocked

"What do you know about her?" Asked Harry

"She was a medic we hired to work on the rig because of all the injuries that happen during that line of work." Said Sheyna "She said she was from Myst, Alexandria I believe."

"Anything else?" Asked Harry

"No only that she said she used to work for the royal family until a few years ago." Said Sheyna

"Wonder what happened to make her leave." Said Harry

"She never went into it." Said Sheyna "I felt it was a sore subject so I never pressed it much."

"She's the only one that makes sense." Said Harry "Unless it was you and I'm sure it wasn't."

"How so?" Asked Sheyna "What makes you think it wasn't one of the others."

"I know they weren't lying when they said they weren't going to tell anyone about any of this." Said Harry "Claire never came right out and said that and if she did I wasn't in a position to tell if she was lying or not."

"Magic again?" Asked Sheyna

"Yeah." Said Harry "I studied it a bit, but it's very hard to see in someone's mind."

"You can read minds!" She asked looking horrified

"Not really just a few surface emotions." Said Harry "Why have something to hide?"

"My thoughts are just that, mine." Said Sheyna

"Even when I do get to the point where I can read minds I won't do it to people I trust." Said Harry "I trust you, even though I don't always act like it."

"Good because I trust you too." Said Sheyna "You've proven yourself in my book."

"Don't be so sure." Said Harry "The mako in my blood won't kill me physically with the counteragent, but it's almost guaranteed to have, and I quote 'mind altering effects'."

"So you'll go crazy from it?" Asked Sheyna

"The doctor said he doesn't know." Said Harry "But in the nine other cases besides mine that's what happened."

"Whoa." Said Sheyna "You've got a lot of problems."

"So how's your week been?" Asked Harry

"Boring." Said Sheyna "After they let me out of my cell and gave me these prison clothes." She gestured to the blue overalls she was wearing. "They wouldn't give me back my weapons or materia, and without those I can't go into the training center, and with you being Mr. Stick-Up-The-Ass I've been pretty much holding up in my room."

"Sorry." Said Harry sheepishly

"Just don't let it happen again." Said Sheyna "And don't worry about going crazy, if that starts to happen I'll just pop you one and you'll be as good as new."

"I feel so safe in your hands." Said Harry sarcastically

"Wait a minute..." Said Sheyna suddenly "If Claire is working for the Black Wings..."

"What?" Asked Harry

"We found a mako reservoir before we left." Said Sheyna "If the Black Wings found out about that they'd do anything to get it."

"So that means that Bikinel Island is in danger." Said Harry catching on.

"We've got to tell Commander Raynor." Said Sheyna "SeeD is about the only defense Spira has."

"Let's go." Said Harry, He opened the door and found Andrea standing against the wall to the side of it. "We need to speak to Raynor."

"He's not available." Said Andrea automatically "What's the problem?"

"The Black Wings are going to attack Bikinel Island if they haven't done it already." Said Sheyna urgently "We need to get there and warn everyone, or try to stop them, or something!"

"Calm down." Said Andrea "Getting hysterical won't help anyone."

"What should we do then?" Asked Harry

"Nothing." Said Andrea "SeeD is already aware of Black Wing presence in Bikinel, they've been there for some time under the alias of the Raging Chocobo Charter Group."

"But if you know that then why haven't you done anything about it?" Asked Sheyna

"No manpower." Said Andrea "Almost all of Garden is tied up with another large matter at the moment."

"What could be more important than stopping the Baron Empire from resurfacing?" Asked Sheyna

"Sorceresses." Said Andrea

Sheyna immediately paled and Harry looked a bit confused. "What do they have to do with anything?" He asked

"Everything." Said Andrea "I really shouldn't be telling you this, but seeing as you're on board the garden it should be alright. That and you'll know soon enough anyway. There are currently three sorceresses alive today. One is Sorceress Vadne, she's old and will most likely pass on her powers to someone else very soon. The other

is a woman named Mia Kottle, She's very young and only recently came into her powers a few years ago. The last one is Sorceress Anastasia, she is currently building an army on Gaea that could rival the Black Wings and SeeD if she's aloud to succeed."

"So you're keeping tabs on all of them and trying to stop Anastasia from building her army?" Asked Harry

"Exactly." Said Andrea "Vadne will most likely pass her powers to one of the other two any day now, Mia is a wildcard because she refuses to take a knight and Anastasia is too consumed by her powers that taking a knight would only give her a personal lapdog."

"What do knights have to do with sorceresses?" Asked Harry

"They help them balance their power." Said Sheyna "A knight keeps a sorceress grounded in her own mind so that the power doesn't consume her."

"And if they don't get one?" Asked the wizard

"They usually try and control everything around them and become some kind of goddess." Said Andrea "That's what Anastasia is doing, and what many before her did. That's why it's SeeD's main goal to regulate them and handle them should they get out of control."

"So Bikinel is just going to have to suffer because you're too busy to save thousands of innocent people that are most likely going to die?" Said Sheyna heatedly

"It's either that or let a mad woman get enough power to kill and enslave billions of people." Said Andrea "It's a hard call to make and don't think that we don't take things like that into account. We simply don't have the manpower, if Maester Griddock had formed a better military instead of going off on some wild peace tangent maybe we'd be able to spare the resources."

"You're right." Said Sheyna "It is that moron's fault."

"I take it he's the leader of Spira?" Said Harry

"Yes, has been for the last fifty years." Said Andrea "We warned him about the Black Wings, but he insisted that Spira would be fine and that having excessive military forces leads to destruction."

"But you're between two warring continents." Said Harry "And the people went along with this?"

"Spirans can be very fickle." Said Sheyna sadly "He swayed the people with his words and painted this picture of a peaceful utopia and equality for everyone. Some saw it for the load of crap it was, but most ate it up."

"Sounds familiar." Said Harry "Really convenient too."

"We are looking into that." Said Andrea "We haven't found anything to suggest Griddock's involvement with Baron though."

"I still wish we could do something." Said Sheyna "My dad's on that island."

"I'm sure he'll be alright." Said Harry trying to be optimistic.

"I hope your right."

...

Lord Tribal was very happy. He had just figured out a way to get rid of the troublesome boy that was already causing him so many problems. All he had to do was wait for his opportunity and that was coming soon. Now though he had a meeting with an insubordinate underling.

"Must you constantly go against me Merlin?" He asked exasperatedly "When you died I offered you a place here because your soul was one full of boundless knowledge and you too had your goals to accomplish. I helped you maneuver destiny to defy fate and you can't even return the favor?"

"What you are trying to accomplish should never be done!" Said Merlin "I see that now, I only wish I'd realized it sooner."

"You don't think I can succeed?" Asked Tribal

"Sephiroth couldn't do it and neither will you." Said Merlin

"Sephiroth was possessed by an alien being and he got arrogant and cocky." Said Tribal "I don't think I can't lose. On the contrary, I'm almost positive I will, but I will still try."

"But at what cost?" Asked Merlin

"It doesn't matter." Said Tribal "No one gave me a choice in the matter, I'm only doing what I was created to do and what Fate forced me to do for merely defending myself."

"What will you do with me then?" Asked Merlin

"Let you go." Said Tribal "I don't care what you do, but remember that every action has a consequence and your meddling will eventually force my hand."

"So be it." Said Merlin

"So it shall be." Said Tribal "I hope you like what I have planned for your little hero."

"I'm sure he'll be able to handle it." Said Merlin "That's why I chose him."

"We'll find out very soon." Said Tribal with a wicked gleam in his blue eyes. "Only one person has ever survived this and even then only barely."

"I have faith in him." Said Merlin confidently

"You'd better hope it is not misplaced." Said Tribal "It happens soon."

...

The next day found Harry entering the training simulator which was merely a circular room with dark blue panels along the walls, floor and ceiling. He looked at Andrea skeptically and asked "So what does this room do?"

"Initiate level five battle scenario, Ruby." Said Andrea. The room started to change and where there was once a circular room now there was a rocky hillside. And on that rocky hillside where five huge red dragons with black scales on their heads and huge wings.

"Ruby dragons." Said Andrea "These ones aren't as strong as most you come across, but they're still very dangerous."

"This is just a simulation right?" Asked Harry

"The monsters look, act and feel like real ones." Said Andrea "Wounds in here are very real and your life is still in danger. Now fight!" She cast a protect spell on herself before charging the closest dragon and slashing with her gunblade. The weapon didn't do much damage on the creature's thick hide and the SeeD had to jump backwards to avoid a claw strike in retaliation. Harry turned to another of the dragons, but unfortunately the rest were very close together. Whenever he would try to get close to one, another would send an extremely hot burst of fire in his direction. The dragons seemed to be getting more and more irritated and suddenly they all charged forward at once. Harry did the only thing he could think of and started to run while firing spells over his shoulder. He even tried Wizarding spells and hurled stunners, blasting hexes and cutting hexes, but nothing seemed to slow them down. Both Impedimenta and the Slow spell did nothing against the beasts which were rapidly gaining on Harry. He decided to switch tactics and turned around and rushed right back at the dragons. He fired a few Blizzaga spells that seemed to greatly frustrate the beasts and gave him the opportunity to get in a few slashes with his sword. The enchanted blade managed to do a little more damage than the gunblade, but the scales still prevented much damage. He screamed in pain as a dragon savagely raked its claws down his back tearing a large trail of four gashes from his left shoulder to his right lower back. He turned around quickly; ignoring the pain it sent through his new wound and swung the sword with all his might at the dragon's head. The dragon was decapitated

neatly and the other three he was dealing with seemed to be enraged even more.

While Harry was dealing with the other dragons Andrea was busy with what appeared to be the leader of the group. It was larger than the others and the crown of scales which covered the top of its head seemed to have more spikes than weaker dragons. By her calculations she realized that the monster was at least Level 70 and that meant it was extremely strong. She quickly checked its spell stash while dodging its breath attack and found that it had Meltdown as a spell to draw. This spell would make the dragon's scales brittle and thereby lower its defenses considerably. She drew the spell out and stocked a few to use later. She then cast the spell on the dragon who started to glow purple as soon as the spell hit. The SeeD wasted no time and charged the beast once again driving her gunblade into its hide. This time the attack caused a deep wound on the creature's right shoulder that oozed black blood. The dragon roared in rage and pain before shooting a breath attack which Andrea was unable to dodge. The fiery attack burned her clothes and caused some severe burns along her skin. She struggled to keep her gunblade in her hands which were screaming in protest as the skin was burned away from them. As soon as the attack was over she cast a Curaga on herself which lessened the pain considerably as it healed the scorched flesh. The spell didn't take away all the pain though as she still felt it in her chest, arms and face. She decided to end the battle now because she knew that Harry would be hard pressed with four dragons and by the roars in the air he was either causing them a lot of pain or making them extremely angry. She thrust the gunblade under the creature's throat and severed its diaphragm right when it was about to fire another breath attack. The result was very interesting. The dragon's attack started to fry it from the inside out and it collapsed to the ground making a sound between a rasp, a growl and a gurgle.

Harry was meanwhile doing his best to avoid breath attacks and Flare spells from his three opponents. He cast a reflect on himself and allowed one of the Flares to hit him. The spell bounced off his shield and hit the dragon that had cast it causing the creature to roar in pain as its scales were charred from its own spell. Harry turned to another dragon and slashed at the claw that was coming his direction. He felt

himself being lost within battle once again and embraced the feeling. He ran head on into a breath attack and erected a very strong shield charm that he hadn't realized he knew. The super heated attack simply bounced around him and when he got close enough to the dragon he drove his blade point first into one of the creature's eyes puncturing its brain.

By this time Andrea had joined the fight and it made it two dragons versus two humans. The dragon whose spell had been reflected charged Harry while the other fired a stream of fire at Andrea. The SeeD used one of the stocked Meltdown spells from the lead dragon and turned the creature's scales soft and brittle. She then followed it up with a Blizzaga spell which caught the dragon in the chest. The place where the spell hit was frozen solid and Andrea quickly slashed the creature across the area shattering its chest cavity and killing it almost instantly.

Harry was having a little trouble with his dragon. It seemed that the creature had learned from its fallen comrades and kept Harry at a distance with its breath attacks. The shield charm had worn off after he had cast it and no matter how hard he tried he couldn't think of how he'd cast it in the first place. Now he was forced to dodge the attacks or risk burning to death. The dragon suddenly stopped firing attacks and looked up into the sky. Suddenly Harry felt a large amount of energy being used. Then huge rocks started coming out of the sky and raining around him. He was hard pressed to dodge the falling meteors and he was hit on more than one attempt which left burns and broken bones on his left side. Not wanting to give the creature any more chances to hurt him he raised his right hand and said "Avada Kadavra!" Green light came from his hand and struck the creature in the chest. The meteors immediately disappeared and the dragon collapsed to the ground dead.

Harry cast a Curaga on himself and the wounds on his back and side promptly started healing. He followed it up with a Regen spell to allow the magic to accelerate his natural healing. The room shifted back into its normal setting leaving no evidence of the battle behind except the throbbing wounds of the two fighters.

...

In the control room of the simulator Commander Raynor looked at the young man down in the room intently. The boy was an enigma and clearly a very powerful warrior. He couldn't allow him to go free and yet he also couldn't keep him confined inside Bessaid Garden. It was too late to train him as a SeeD because he was too old and although he knew how to use Junctions it was still a far cry from the training regiment of a SeeD cadet. He had one more test he wanted to put the boy through before he considered going ahead with his plan. He'd do it the next day when Harry came to train, he was sure that the battle would be most interesting.

...

"That was crazy." Said Harry as they left the simulator "How many levels of combat does that thing have, if that was only on level 5?"

"Fifty." Said Andrea "But any level above twenty five requires special clearance."

"But we almost died." Said Harry "What could possibly be at level 50?"

"Keep coming and I'm sure you'll find out." Said Andrea "I need a shower and some rest, you should head back to your quarters."

"Yeah I'll see you later then." Said Harry

...

The next day found Harry, Sheyna and Andrea back in the simulator. Commander Raynor had returned Sheyna's weapons on the grounds that she not attempt any harm against anyone in the garden and that since everyone else had weapons and magic at all times, so she really couldn't do much damage even if she wanted to. Sheyna had jumped at the opportunity to do anything besides aimlessly wandering around so she joined them in the simulator.

"Today we're doing a special battle." Said Raynor over the intercom from the control room. "You will be engaging a highly dangerous

monster that under normal circumstances would most likely kill you easily.”

“How are we supposed to avoid being killed then?” Asked Harry “The monsters aren’t real, but the injuries sure are.”

“We have safeguards to prevent any long term damage or death.” Said Raynor “The quicker you manage to kill it the less likely you’ll be injured.”

“Sir, are you sure they should be doing this?” Asked Andrea hesitantly

“You sound worried Pryde.” Said Raynor “I’m sure you’ll be able to handle it. Computer initiate Level 45 battle scenario ULTIMA.”

The room shifted and the group found themselves in some kind of ruined excavation site. There was nothing in the room except rocks and cement.

“Protective spells now!” Said Andrea urgently. She cast Aura on all of them while Harry cast Regen, Shell and Protect. Sheyna took care of the Haste spells and the group waited. About fifteen seconds later an unearthly cry sounded through the room. The ground started shaking and a huge black creature burst from beneath the rocks. It was about ten feet tall and looked to Harry like a mutated centaur. It had four legs which held a vaguely humanoid torso with heavily muscled arms. In its hands it held a very large silver sword which had blue energy running in a channel along its center. On its chest there was a circular protrusion that held dark purple energy within. The creature charged them and swung the monstrous blade in its hands so fast the group barely dodged. Harry felt the Aura spell charging his energy and let it do its work. His sword turned black and he charged the creature with Oblivion’s Avatar. The monster blocked most of the sword strikes with its own weapon, but a few managed to nick its hide which was harder than diamond. Andrea fired a Meltdown spell at it which barely affected the tough armor of the beast. She followed the spell by using Ranzokuken and just like Harry’s attack hers hardly did any damage to the monster. Sheyna used her Meteor Shot and this seemed to aggravate the creature because the rocks managed to scuff its armor

more than the sword attacks. Harry fired a killing curse at the monster and it hit. The trouble was that it didn't do anything. Now the wizard was worried. Nothing was supposed to be able to survive that curse and this creature hadn't even reacted to it. The power core on the monster's chest started to glow and Harry felt an intense amount of magic in the air. He knew whatever the creature was about to do was going to be very painful.

...

"Terminate the simulation." Said Raynor "They aren't ready for a battle like this."

"Yes sir." Said the technician. He tapped a few buttons and the room in the simulator went back to normal. The monster however didn't go anywhere. "Something's wrong sir!"

"Damnit I said terminate it!" Yelled Raynor

"I did sir, but Ultima Weapon won't respond to commands. It's almost like it's..." Trilled the technician

"Like it's what Smith?" Asked Raynor

"Real sir." Said Smith

"Oh great Hyne." Said Raynor fearfully "Emergency alert all qualified SeeDs report to the training simulator immediately!" He said into the intercom. He watched in horror as the creature released the burst of purple energy which blasted everything inside the room.

Ultima Weapon

When the room shifted back to normal and the monster was still there Harry knew something was wrong. As the energy core glowed brighter and brighter the wizard desperately thought of way to protect himself and his friends. The energy from the Aura spell was still in his reach and he focused on it and willed it to become a shield for him and the others. Just as the attack was released Harry cast a spell of his own creation. "Protego Diasum!" A golden globe surrounded him, Andrea and Sheyna and when the energy washed over the shield it held just long enough to withstand the attack. When the smoke cleared the room was in ruins. The panels along the wall were totally destroyed and the wiring behind the walls was also gone. All that remained of the room was charred concrete. The adamantium doors had been blasted open and the jungle environment of the training center could be seen beyond.

The monster didn't give the group a chance to collect themselves. It simply started on its assault once more. Harry was the first on its target list. It viciously impaled the wizard through his stomach with its sword. Next it attacked Sheyna slashing ruthlessly across her abdomen sending her to the ground. Andrea didn't fare much better as the creature shot a beam of blue energy from its hand and blasted a hole through the right side of the SeeD's chest.

Harry felt his blood spattering across his hands where he feebly tried to hold his gaping wound together. He knew that a Curaga spell wouldn't be able to handle this as it was a mortal wound. He remembered the spell that Sophia had given him before she left the desert and he wondered if that would help him. Unfortunately he couldn't even summon the energy needed to cast the spell and he felt himself drifting into the abyss of death.

Andrea saw her two comrades fall and knew she wasn't far behind. The blast had taken out most of one of her lungs and she was barely keeping herself from blacking out. She fumbled in her belt pouch and brought out an Elixir. She bit the cap off and gulped it down. The hole in her chest healed and she felt her breathing return to normal. The creature had moved away from them assuming they were dead and was now terrorizing the fiends outside in the training center. She

noticed that Sheyna was breathing shallowly and she rushed over to the girl and poured a second Elixir down her throat. She noticed that Harry was lying completely still and that his hands lay limp at his side. His emerald green eyes were open but no life remained in them. She knew it wasn't too late though and focused on casting a spell for just this situation. She walked over to his prone body and cast a Life spell. Red energy swept over his body and his wound closed to the point where it was only trickling blood. He started breathing again and groaned in pain. She gave him an Elixir as well and they were all relatively in one peace again.

"What the hell is that thing?" Asked Harry

"Ultima Weapon." Said Andrea "Toughest fiend on the planet next to Omega."

"There's something stronger than that?" Asked Sheyna incredulously
"And why didn't it stop with the rest of the simulator?"

"A malfunction I guess." Said Andrea "Just be glad it's not acting like the real Ultima Weapon. If it was we'd all be dead because that thing wouldn't stop until there was nothing but ash left of our bodies."

"I thought I was dead." Said Harry "But when I got close to this bright light something pulled me back into my body."

"Life spell." Said Andrea "If it's used within ten minutes of death by unnatural causes the person can usually be revived."

"Glad you had one then." Said Harry "Where did it go anyway?"

"It went out there and started attacking the other fiends." Said Andrea
"The real Ultima is smart, that thing is just a mindless killer. We should be able to use that to our advantage."

"You've got a plan then?" Asked Harry

"Something like that." Said the SeeD "Here's what we do..."

...

Commander Raynor was frantic. After the simulator had malfunctioned he'd gathered all the available SeeDs and headed to the training center. When he got there he found the doors sealed and no one was having any luck entering. What was worse was that there were cadets inside the area as well.

"Any luck with the door Dincht?" Asked the commander

"No sir." Said Dincht "The release mechanism isn't responding."

"Well blast it open." Said Raynor

"Affirmative." Said Dincht. Another SeeD stepped forward and handed him a small explosive. He fastened it to the doors and backed away. "Alright clear!" He pushed a button and the small bomb produced a surprisingly powerful explosion. Smoke filled the room and when it cleared the door was still standing with only a scorch mark where the bomb had exploded.

"What the hell?" Said the commander "That was a neutron bomb! It can blow through just about anything."

"I don't know sir." Said Dincht "We could try magic."

"You'd have to use some pretty powerful spells to get through that door." Said Raynor "Try a few Flare spells on it."

Three SeeDs raised their hands and said "Flare!" The spells hit the door but were immediately sent back to their casters by some kind of barrier. The SeeDs dodged their returned spells and the group sat outside the door contemplating on how to get in.

"Try a Dispel." Said the commander. The SeeDs tried the spell, but it too had no effect. "Alright everyone stand aside. Birch hand me your gunblade." A blonde haired SeeD handed the commander his weapon and the others stood aside. Raynor cast an Aura spell on himself and started focusing on the energy he raised the gunblade above his head and said "Blasting Zone!" A white beam of energy shot out of the blade and blasted a hole through the ceiling. He lowered

the blade so that the beam was facing the door. When the beam hit a powerful barrier appeared on the entire wall surrounding the training center. Raynor could feel his attack being resisted and he cut it off before the energy could be forced back to him. The Aura spell dissipated and the commander panted with exhaustion. Using that technique usually required one to enter the Ranzokuken trance. Doing it without that used a lot more energy. He didn't know what was keeping them out, but he needed to do something and do something fast.

...

Andrea ran through the training center looking for her target. Her plan was sound and as long as Harry and Sheyna did their parts she had no doubts of its success. The hard part came in them actually succeeding in what they were trying to do. Timing was everything and there were many variables that could affect the procedure. It was up to her to draw its attention.

The monster wasn't hard to find. All she had to do was follow the path of wanton destruction. Fiend corpses littered the ground amongst broken trees and crumbled rock. She didn't see any other SeeDs yet and she counted this as a good thing. Only highly skilled fighters could deal with a monster of this level which was why she'd been hesitant to participate in the simulation. She found the monster about to attack a group of cadets. The young students couldn't be older than twelve and just starting at Garden. As the creature was about to slash one of the students with its sword Andrea started to draw magic from it. She took some of the Meteor spells as it was very good for junctioning and would serve as a good annoyance for the monster. The beast turned to face her and roared in fury. The students immediately left the area and Andrea let loose with one of her newly drawn spells. Meteors began to rain down upon the beast causing it to roar in fury once again. Andrea wasted no time in casting a Haste on herself and began to run and firing some spells like Firaga and Blizzaga behind her. Now it was up to Sheyna to do her part.

...

Sheyna sat in her spot atop a tree. She held the ammo that Andrea had given her and wondered how the SeeD had come across it. Pulse Ammo was illegal to possess in every country except Wutai and even there firing it was worth a good deal of prison time. This ammo contained the very essence of Ultima. It was concentrated and could produce a blast that could shoot through anything. If this didn't get the job done then nothing would. She heard a commotion in the distance and knew that Andrea had gotten the creature's attention. She shifted position to get a better aim on the path below. She heard something move in the tree behind her and turned quickly to see a particularly large Grat that was about to fire its sleeping powder at her. She let off a Firaga spell which caused the creature to shriek in pain as the flames consumed its body. Unfortunately the fire spread to the tree and Sheyna was forced to abandon her post. When she got down the tree she saw a brown blur fly past her and heard a crashing sound in the distance which was heading in her direction. She wasted no time in casting a Haste of her own and following Andrea. As she pulled along side the SeeD the other woman looked at her quizzically

"Grat, fire, had to move." She said by way of explanation. Andrea simply nodded and turned back around to face the monster.

"I'll buy you some more time." She said "Find another perch and when you get a chance blast its head off."

Sheyna nodded and continued to run, looking for another tree to get a good aim on the monster's head. She could fire from the ground but it was likely the creature would use its sword to lessen the impact of the shot or use some kind of barrier. She only had two shots to work with. Behind her she heard the tell-tale sound of rocks crashing to the ground and knew that a Meteor spell had been used. She hoped Andrea had been the one to use it.

...

Harry stood by the wrecked simulator and gathered power. He knew what he had to do and he was desperately hoping that nothing went wrong. If it did he'd most likely be killed. He was putting all his power into a shield spell that could stop Ultima Weapon's energy blast. After it had stopped the blast he had to convert it into a blast of pure

energy and literally overload the creature's core. It seemed Andrea was out of Aura spells so he had to do this the hard way. He pulled as much magic as he could from within himself until he couldn't handle anymore. Then he cast the same spell he'd used before. "Protego Diasum!" The divine shield came around him glowing brightly. Now all he had to do was hold it until the monster got ready to release another energy blast. He heard the sounds of battle in the distance and knew that his comrades were doing their part.

"It will never work." Said a disembodied voice "I don't know why you're even bothering with this silly plan."

"Whose there?" Asked Harry

"Such a pathetic wizard." Said the voice "Don't you know how to use your real power boy?"

"Why do you care?" Asked Harry indigently

"And you're supposed to kill a dark lord." Said the voice condescendingly "You've got a long way to go. But fear not I'll teach you, eventually."

"Who are you?" Asked Harry "And teach me what?"

"You'll find out soon enough." Said the voice "Think of this as your first test, kill the creature and you pass, don't kill it and...well it will probably kill you seeing as how I've blocked off all entrance and exit into this area."

"You what?" Asked Harry flabbergasted "You can't do that!"

"I assure you I can and I have." Said the voice "We'll meet soon Harry Potter, and remember in order to win this battle you must tap into your full potential."

"Well how do I do that?" Asked Harry but he received no answer. Instead he heard movement behind him and turned with his sword drawn facing who or whatever was coming his way.

“Whoa.” Said a man who came through the brush. He was the other SeeD Harry had seen talking to Andrea on the docks. He held a long iron bow staff in both hands and he wore the usual SeeD uniform. “I come in peace.”

“You know what’s happening then?” Asked Harry

“All I know is that there’s a priority alert coming from the simulator.” Said Bates “And I find you here next to a destroyed room.”

“Well I didn’t do it if that’s what you’re saying.” Said Harry “The simulation went haywire and now Ultima Weapon is running around the training center wreaking havoc.”

“No way!.” Said Bates “I was in here training when I heard the call and I told the cadets to head back to the entrance.”

“It’s sealed.” Said Harry “And it won’t open until I kill that thing.”

“How do you know that?” Asked Bates

“I just do.” Said Harry “So are you going to help or what?”

“What’s the plan?” Asked Bates

“Find Andrea and help her keep it busy.” Said Harry “I’ll be along as soon as I’m done.”

“And you’re doing what exactly?” Asked Bates

“I’m channeling as much energy as I can into this shield and then I’m going to release it when that thing gets ready to fire its energy pulse again.”

“If you really think that will work.” Said Bates “Good luck with that then.”

...

Andrea was quickly growing tired from using so much energy casting the powerful spell. She was however having some success at slowing the beast down and damaging it some. When Sheyna had pulled up beside her she had been worried about what could have happened, but after handling the situation she was once again in a grimly calm mindset. It wasn't often when she felt fear, but right now she felt it and she didn't like it one bit. The real Ultima Weapon had claimed many lives and had yet to be truly defeated. There were stories of people who had taken it down, but it always came back again. And this thing was an almost exact replica of the real thing only lacking the intelligence, but having all of the power.

The monster came into sight again showing the marks along its armor where the meteors had hit. It didn't seem to be affected by the numerous dents across its hide. If anything they only served to make it angry. She steadied herself and started to draw more magic from it. Instead of stocking the spell she simply cast it and allowed the creature's own magic to be used against it. While the spell took its course she cast a Thundaga on herself and let the energy of the spell refuel her. When the Meteor spell ended she prepared herself to run once again. Before she did however she felt herself being pulled into the space between planes and someone shout "Tornado Zone!" A large humanoid creature appeared on the other side of the beast. It was mostly purple with a few shades of yellow here and there. In its hands it held a large bag which it opened and took in a large amount of air until the bag was filled to the bursting point. It then released the air and a monstrous tornado erupted from the bag. The whirlwind tossed the beast about smacking it with trees, boulders and whatever stray fiend that was caught in the cyclone. Once it was over the GF, which she recognized as Pandamona, disappeared and she felt herself return to the physical plane. She cast another Meteor before the creature could react and started to sprint away once again. She noticed someone running beside her and saw Ethan Bates.

'Fancy meeting you here.' He said

"Likewise." She responded "You're the only backup?"

"I don't think anyone else can get in." He told her "According to the offworlder no one can get in or out until that thing is dead."

"I'll have to ask him how he knows that later." Said Andrea "When it gets back in range draw and cast Meteor."

"Gotcha." Said Ethan

Soon enough Ultima Weapon came within range again and this time it didn't give its quarry a chance to mount an offense. It let loose its own Meteor spell and the SeeDs were hard pressed to dodge the falling rocks while still keeping well ahead of the monster. Suddenly a huge beam of white-blue energy pounded the creature's head. It blasted a hole straight through it and the monster immediately stopped moving. When the light produced by the impact faded the beast's head was charred heavily and had a gaping hole in it. This didn't seem to stop it though, it cast a Curaga on itself and the SeeDs watched in horror as it started to gather energy into its core once again. Another blast, this one aimed at the core hit the creature, but this only seemed to make it gather more energy even quicker. Andrea didn't know where Harry was, but she hoped he was ready for his part.

...

Harry was following the sounds of battle in order to reach his friends. He was still gathering energy and putting it into his shield and he hoped it would be enough to make the difference. The mysterious voice's words bothered him greatly though. It made him second guess himself. Was he able to defeat Voldemort? Even with the new magic he had learned was the Dark Lord still too much for him? He viciously pushed these thoughts aside and concentrated on his goal. He could feel the gathering energy in the air and knew that Ultima Weapon was about to use its energy blast once again. He sped up and in the distance he saw the creature towering over Andrea and Ethan. He didn't know where Sheyna was, but he knew she couldn't be too far away. He willed himself to move faster and it seemed as though time started to slow down. He raced between the monster and the SeeDs and converted his shield into a blast of golden energy. Ultima Weapon unleashed its attack at the exact same time and the two attacks collided in mid air. Harry pushed with all his might trying to force the magic back into the monster, and Ultima Weapon pushed

right back. The voice's words rang in Harry's head once again telling him to use his full potential. He dug deep into his magical core forcing the power forward. He was in great physical pain from channeling such a massive amount of energy, but he kept telling himself to ignore the pain because he could not allow this creature to win. He let out a scream of pain, rage and defiance as he felt the power surge forward. The monster's energy crashed back into its core and Harry's followed after it. White lights started to stream from the creature's body and the ground started to shake violently. Then the monster exploded in a massive burst of energy which hurled Harry and the two SeeDs backwards about a hundred feet. Sheyna was blown from her tree perch nearby and landed on the ground painfully. The few fiends that had been brave enough to watch the battle were also blasted away by the force of the explosion and smoke filled the entire area.

...

"He won." Said Merlin triumphantly

"Don't get so happy." Retorted Tribal "He's lucky I couldn't send the real thing after him."

"How did you manipulate the simulator anyway?" Asked Merlin curiously

"I used some soul energy and poured it into the hologram." Explained Tribal "Nothing important only Kefka's."

"You used Kefka's soul energy to fuel it?" Asked Merlin incredulously

"Relax." Said Tribal "For one thing I can do whatever I want with the souls that come through here, that was part of the deal for me taking this position. Second he was useless without his magic and since he was destroyed, again, where do you think he'll go?"

"I see." Said Merlin

“Now that this plan has failed.” Said Tribal “I’ll start on my next one. And by the way Merlin if you go ahead with interfering in the ritual I don’t think you will like the consequences.”

“You can do whatever you wish to me Zidane.” Said Merlin

“I know I can.” Said Tribal “But who says I’ll do anything to you?”

...

“The door’s opening sir!” Said Dinch

“All units proceed with caution.” Ordered Raynor

As the blast doors slid open smoke filled the corridor outside. The assembled group had heard a large explosion go off and many feared the worst. Through the smoke people started running out of the doors. Had it not been for a hasty “Stand down!” by Raynor the fleeing cadets would have been obliterated by the SeeDs.

“What happened?” Asked the commander

“I don’t know sir.” Said one of the cadets “This huge monster started attacking us and Pryde comes and starts attacking it!”

“What happened after that?” Asked Raynor patiently

“We ran sir.” Said the cadet a bit shamefully

“I told you we should have tried to fight it.” Said another cadet

“You did the right thing.” Said Raynor “Report to the infirmary immediately and let Dr. Akanowi check you out.”

The cadets gave a one fingered salute and headed off to the infirmary. The SeeDs walked through the doors and into the ruined training center. Many of the trees were uprooted or simply charred beyond recognition. As they reached the center of the facility they saw a huge crater in the ground that looked as though it reached the garden’s lower hull. The hole was about thirty feet in diameter and had pieces

of charred metal embedded around it. They skirted around the hole and a few yards away they saw three people sprawled on the ground.

“White MG users get over there NOW!” Barked Raynor and a group of SeeDs detached themselves from the group and went to the fallen fighters to start healing them. “I need a squad to collect some of that metal from the crater. Everyone else follow me.” They continued walking having to dispatch a stray fiend here and there and they eventually came across Sheyna who was sporting a badly broken leg while firing at some Drakes that had decided she was an easy meal. The assembled SeeDs took immediate action and made quick work of the miniature dragons. A medic went over to her and healed her leg and the many wounds she sported from her ordeal.

“What happened?” Asked Raynor

“We were in the simulator and when you ended it the thing didn’t die.” Said Sheyna “We almost died, but Andrea had some Life spells and prevented that. We made a plan, executed it and I think we managed to kill it.”

“Alright.” Said Raynor “Report to the infirmary so we can check you out more thoroughly.”

Sheyna made to protest but a look from the commander told her that this wasn’t a request. She sighed and allowed herself to be escorted out of the training facility. Raynor looked around the ruined area and shook his head. This was going to be a lot of paperwork not to mention a real chore to explain to central command. Then there was the offworlder. He was sure that the boy had been the one to destroy it. He knew that Andrea had most likely come up with whatever plan had been used as she was always the strategist, but the boy. The boy had an incredible amount of power and something like that could be very dangerous. However caging him like an animal could be equally dangerous as caged animals often turned on their captors given half a chance.

He would have to work out a compromise and a way to slip it past central command. They would say he should keep the boy in captivity,

but he disagreed. Therefore there was only one thing to do and he hoped he was making the right choice.

...

For once when Harry awoke he didn't feel any pain at all. He wondered about this until he took in his surroundings. He was in the main chamber of his mind. This explained the lack of pain at least. The last thing he remembered before blacking out was Ultima Weapon exploding and feeling an intense amount of pain. Pain, that seemed to be the main theme of his life as it was a feeling he was very familiar with.

He decided that since he was here he may as well start organizing his recent memories. He'd found that since he started organizing his thoughts better he could process information more quickly and this in turn had sharpened his reflexes considerably.

"I told you you'd be glad you listened to me." Said Seth coming from the Junctions chamber.

"Now you decide to say something." Said Harry dryly "I could have used a hand earlier you know."

"You did fine." Said Seth "And I wouldn't have been much help, I never fought that thing so I remained quiet."

"How thoughtful of you." Said Harry sarcastically "So what brings you here now?"

"That voice you heard." Said Seth

"What about it?" Asked Harry

"You've heard it before." Said Seth

"What when?" Asked the wizard confused

"Review your memories of the last few weeks and I'm sure you'll find it." Said Seth

So Harry did. He went over his memories of conversations from the last few weeks, but he couldn't find anything. He did find something interesting though. He was looking at his memories from after the sphere battle and realized that subconsciously he'd been aware of what had happened. He'd been taken out of the sphere by an EMT squad and they had turned out to be SeeDs. After that he'd been taken aboard Garden where he'd been treated before being transferred to his cell.

He thought hard about how the voice sounded and compared it to one's he'd heard before. It wasn't the same voice that he'd heard after the airship crash and it wasn't anyone he'd heard in Moonflow. Then something clicked. The old man at the travel lodge. He'd thought that he'd felt a touch of Legilimancy but he'd dismissed it once the man started talking about his sex life.

"Found it?" Asked Seth

"It would have been faster if you'd just told me." Said Harry

"It was a good practice opportunity." Said the serpent

"It still would have been faster." Said Harry "How long was I out of it anyway?"

"You're still 'out of it'." Said Seth "You'll wake up eventually; it's only been a few hours since the battle so don't worry."

"Why did the simulator malfunction?" Wondered Harry

"I could feel a lot of spiritual energy when the monster appeared and I was gong to mention it, but you were a little preoccupied with staying alive."

"Yeah." Said Harry "I owe Andrea again, that's twice she's saved my life."

"You'd better get started on paying her back then." Said Seth "It's not good to have debts like that hanging around."

"I trust her." Said Harry "If she wanted to kill me she'd have done it already and even though she did turn me over to SeeD I can't say that she didn't warn me that it would happen."

"You should start working on Legilimancy now." Said Seth "If you insist on trusting people so much then you need to have some foundation. I'm not saying invade all their private thoughts just root out their intentions towards you."

"That's not a bad idea." Said Harry "Although I've had no instruction in this and I've only been winging it so far."

"You should find that old man then." Said Seth "He said he would train you and he knew a lot about the Wizarding world."

"That was weird." Said Harry "I wonder who he is."

"You won't find out by staying here." Said the serpent "You should probably come out now people are starting to get worried."

"I'll talk to you later then." Said Harry pulling out of his mind and immediately feeling stiff all over. It was a good contrast to the pain he'd been expecting, but it was still uncomfortable.

"You're alive!" Said Sheyna hugging him so tightly that it would make Mrs. Weasley jealous.

"Air!" He managed to choke out.

"Sorry." She said sheepishly letting go of him. "You had me worried though."

"I wasn't out that long was I?" He asked

"Ten hours." Said Andrea from across the room "The rest of us woke up about an hour after we came to the infirmary. You though were in a lot worse shape."

"What'd I break?" Asked Harry

“Almost everything.” Said Dr. Akanowi coming to stand by his bed “I had to do a Full-Life spell just to get you breathing again and then I had to apply Elixir swabs to your damaged areas because you had so much internal damage that you couldn’t swallow one.”

“Wow.” Said Harry “That’s a new record for me.”

“It’s not funny.” Said Sheyna “You could have died.”

“But I didn’t.” Said Harry “No use fretting over it now.”

“You shouldn’t make light of your injuries Harry.” Said Andrea “It’s amazing you aren’t still out and when the numbing agent wears off you’ll probably feel a lot of pain.”

“Oh joy.” Said Harry dryly

“There is some good news though.” Said Sheyna “I think the commander is going to let us go, with some conditions.”

“Really?” Said Harry “I was afraid I’d have to do something drastic like try and break out of here.”

“That would be incredibly stupid.” Said Andrea “You’d make yourself a primary target for SeeD and trust me you don’t want that.”

“It would have been a necessary risk.” Said Harry “I’ve got things to do and staying here isn’t one of them.”

“It’s a good thing for you that the commander understands that.” Said Andrea “He’ll talk to you about it later, for now you have to rest.”

“That’s correct Miss Pryde.” Said Akanowi “While I did mend your bones and fix most of the internal injuries you’ll be stiff for a few days and even after that try to avoid these kinds of things.”

“These kinds of things find me.” Said Harry “I thought that with Voldemort not being here I’d spend less time hurt; looks like I was wrong.”

“Seems so.” Said Sheyna “This is what the fifth time in less than four months that you’ve been seriously hurt?”

“At least you haven’t lost count.” Said Harry

They shared a good laugh at this and Harry spent the next three days in the infirmary until he gained complete movement from all his newly healed bones. The day he left the infirmary he was escorted to the commander’s office by Andrea and Ethan. Once inside he saw Sheyna already seated in front of the commander’s desk and three other seats available. The new arrivals sat down and the commander addressed them.

“Welcome Mr. Potter, Mr. Bates, Miss Pryde.” He said formally “I’m sure yourselves and Miss Ironhide are wondering why you are here. To answer that question let me first thank all four of you for your help in dealing with the incident four days ago.”

“Just doing our duty sir.” Said Andrea

“Your welcome sir.” Said Ethan

Sheyna and Harry remained quiet wondering what this was about.

“I am aware that your stay here hasn’t exactly been enjoyable.” Said Raynor.

“Understatement of the century.” Thought Harry

“We’ll be docking in Lucca soon and I am willing to release the both of you provided that you agree to a few conditions.”

“And they are?” Asked Harry

“You can understand the position I’m in.” Said Raynor “I’ve got a literal alien and someone who could be tried for treason against the country of Spira.”

“What?” Asked Harry looking at Sheyna “You could be tried for treason?”

“It’s not as bad as it sounds.” Said Sheyna

“She could be thrown in prison for life.” Said Andrea “After the last merger anyone who knowingly comes in contact with an offworlder is required by law to report it to the proper authorities. Failure to do so is seen as treason by every country on the planet.”

“You should have reported me then.” Said Harry “I didn’t want to mess up anyone else’s life.”

“Shut up Harry.” Said Sheyna “We’ve been over this and we aren’t discussing it again.”

“As I was saying.” Said Raynor cutting off Harry’s response “I am in a very difficult position here. On one hand I have you in custody and Garden Central Command would have me keep it that way. However, I’ve gotten information from you that could greatly prepare us for what could happen when your world merges with ours. I say when because I strongly believe this is a possibility. One thousand years ago the last offworlder was reported. He had powers like yours or so the records say, but he was never caught. Eventually he disappeared and no one heard anything more about him.”

“I believe he was from your world since he had powers similar to yours. That would mean that a merger is most likely eminent. Since I have the information from you keeping you here is only going to frustrate you and I don’t want that because you don’t seem like the type of person to sit and accept that.”

“Smart man.” Said Harry “I’d really hate to try and leave by force, but I would if you tried to keep me here too much longer.”

“I understand.” Said Raynor “That is why I want to offer a compromise. When we dock in Lucca you may leave. I’ll give you back your trunk and you can basically do whatever you please as long as it doesn’t interfere with SeeD. Therefore go back to doing whatever it was you were doing.”

“And the catch?” Asked Sheyna

“SeeDs Bates and Pryde will accompany you and report back to me every three days on your actions and whereabouts. We’ll see how this goes, and should it become a problem you’ll have the whole of SeeD to deal with.”

“Fine.” Said Harry

“What?” Asked Sheyna rounding on him.

“I don’t care if they know what I’m doing.” Said Harry “It’s not like I’m trying to take over the world or anything. Besides having two extra people to deal with all the monsters around will come in handy.” Harry could tell she wanted to ask about the cargo so he answered the unspoken question “We’ll cross that bridge when we get there.”

“It’s your call then.” Said Sheyna

“So are we agreed?” Asked Raynor

“Yes.” Said Harry “Welcome to the team mate.” He said turning to Ethan and holding out his hand. “I’m Harry Potter.”

“Ethan Bates.” Said Ethan shaking his hand.

“Too bad I was hoping we could ditch Andrea somewhere.” Joked Harry

“You’d die if you left me.” Said Andrea “I’ll remember that next time I think about saving your ass.”

“We’ll be in Lucca tomorrow morning.” Said Raynor “Dismissed.”

...

The rest of the day Harry spent in his quarters strengthening his Occlumency shields. He realized that he needed to open his connection with Voldemort more and that would require stronger

shields. He needed to know what the bastard was up to, even if there wasn't much he could do about it. He started by putting up a huge dome of the strongest substance his mind could think of. A transparent bubble came up around the entirety of his mental realm and smaller versions of it came up around each of the doors and passageways. He looked at the corridor labeled 'Forms' once again and tried to open it. As hard as he tried the gates and locks blocking the way wouldn't budge. Seth was no help in this area so Harry simply tried through sheer force of will. Still however he achieved no results.

He was startled out of his thoughts when he heard a knocking on his door. He opened it and found Sheyna standing there. He let her in and as soon as he closed the door she started on him.

"What the hell were you thinking?" She asked heatedly "We have to deliver war supplies to a group that is most likely on SeeD's shit list and you volunteer to bring two of them with us."

"Keep your voice down." Said Harry "I realize that, but there was really nothing we could do." Said Harry "He didn't believe me when I said we were going to Bevelle so I'm really not surprised. We'll have to think of something. They know I can turn invisible, but maybe I can still use it to sneak out."

"You'd better think of something really good then." Said Sheyna

"What are you going to do once we deliver the cargo?" Asked Harry changing the subject

"I'd like to go to Bevelle." She said "I haven't seen my mom in a while."

"I thought your dad said..." Started Harry

"I'm not a child." Said Sheyna "I don't have to listen to him. He should be more worried about himself now anyway now that Bikinel is in danger."

“Your mum must have had a reason to not want you in Bevelle though.” Said Harry

“Well then I’ll find out what it is when I get there.” Said Sheyna “What about you. When we’re done with the cargo delivery where will you go?”

“I’m not sure.” Said Harry “If you’re going to Bevelle I’ll probably follow you, I don’t think our escorts are going to let us separate. I need to find something though, so if you don’t mind once you finish up in Bevelle We’ll need to start looking.”

“You’re probably right.” Said Sheyna “They won’t let us go our separate ways since I know too much about this. What are you looking for anyway?”

“In the training center someone spoke to me.” Said Harry “I know it sounds crazy but they did. He’s the one that sealed the doors and he’s probably responsible for the simulator going haywire too.”

“What did he say?” Asked Sheyna

“He basically called me a sorry excuse for a wizard.” Said Harry “He knew a lot about me too.”

“You want to find him then?” She asked already knowing the answer

“Yeah.” Said Harry “He may be able to tell me how to get back home.”

“Do you even know where to start?” She asked

“No.” Said Harry “He said he’d find me.”

“Then don’t worry about it then.” Said Sheyna “I’m sure everything will work itself out for you.”

“I hope you’re right.” Said Harry

...

The next morning the foursome met the commander at the front gate of the garden. Harry could see the city in the distance and it was an impressive sight. It was mostly white and it had several docks. There were several tall buildings that reminded him of cities in his world because they were more square than round like so many of the buildings he'd seen here. Even with all the population the air didn't seem to be polluted and Harry enjoyed the scent of the fresh sea air.

"We'll be arriving in fifteen minutes." Said Raynor "I'll advise you again not to take my kindness for a weakness."

"Don't worry we won't." Said Harry

"For your sakes I hope you don't." Said Raynor "It would make things unpleasant for all parties involved."

"Sir I appreciate it." Said Harry "You could just lock me up and throw away the key but your giving me a chance and I thank you for that."

"Your appreciation is noted Mr. Potter." Said Raynor "Now I'll leave you four to it. Mr. Bates, Miss Pryde." He saluted the two SeeDs who promptly returned it.

Twenty minutes later the group found themselves standing on dock five of Luca Harbor. Harry didn't know quite what to expect from this point forward. He knew that at any time he could lapse into a fit of uncontrollable pain once Voldemort started his ritual, and he also knew that he was about to be pulling some very delicate maneuvers in order to get the shipment to Bastian. It would have taken them a couple of weeks to go through Djose and the Mi'hem Highway so they were relatively still on schedule despite the many drawbacks. The original plan had been to stay in Luca a few weeks to get Harry accustomed to the ways of Temprus and then find Bastian. Now all they had to do was find Bastian since Harry had gotten a crash course in the Temprian world. Taking a deep breath Harry headed into the city followed by his current entourage not knowing what to expect, but ready none the less.

A/N: I hope no one was dissapointed in the battle. I rewrote it a bit from what I first had because I didn't think it was on par with the rest of the fight scenes, but after I rewrote it I still wasn't satisfied. I couldn't think of any ways to improve it short of redoing the whole chapter, so I decided to leave it as is. As always leave a review letting me know what you think. Flames will be laughed at, constructive criticism will be considered.

Chaos Flame

The sun was shining brightly and the many citizens of Lucca went about their daily lives creating the hustle and bustle the city was known for. The mood of most people was generally pleasant considering the recent events. While some were worried about the recent attacks and wondered if their city would be next, most put faith in the government and SeeD to prevent such a thing from happening again.

The other big talk of the town was the boy who had showed such a prowess at defeating a powerful fiend right after the Blitzball Regional Finals. The spherecast had been all over Spira and even parts of Glacia and Gaea. Everyone knew the boy's face and many people wanted to meet him. Unfortunately for the young man in question the people standing near Dock 5 were about to get their wish.

Harry, Ethan, Andrea and Sheyna were heading toward the center of town when someone spotted Harry.

"Hey it's him!" Shouted a passerby

"Him who?" Wondered Harry

"It's the Fiend Slayer!" Shouted someone else.

"Oh no." Said Sheyna

"They must have seen the spherecast." Said Andrea "You've got quite the fan club Harry."

"You have got to be kidding me." Said Harry "All I did was try to stay alive."

"They don't see it that way." Said Ethan "Most of Garden saw what you did too. Just be glad that these people don't know about Ultima Weapon."

"Yeah that's the last thing I need." Said Harry "Look guys I'll meet you in the center of town I've got to get out of here."

"You can't do that." Said Andrea

"He can't but I can." Said Ethan "I've got something to take care of. I'll meet you guys at the old stadium." The SeeD ran straight through the crowd despite their angry protests and disappeared.

"Hey can I have your autograph?" Asked someone from the growing crowd.

"Here's my comm. number." Said another random girl throwing a piece of paper at Harry.

"Know what go ahead." Said Andrea "Meet us by the old stadium in the middle of town."

"I'll be there." Said Harry

"Leave the trunk with Sheyna." Said Andrea

"No problem." Said Harry handing the still shrunken trunk to the raven haired girl. "If I didn't know better I'd say you thought I'd run off." Said Harry teasingly

"You'd better go before they get physical." Said Andrea nodding to the crowd that was muttering and looking at Harry as if he was a piece of meat.

"Yeah see you." Said Harry before he turned invisible. The crowd gasped when he disappeared and a couple people even took out Sense Materia to root out his location. Unfortunately one of them caught him with the spell before he could get out of the circle and he was hard pressed to outrun the crowd. He'd never had to do this in the Wizarding world and he found himself almost missing the Order escorts, almost. The low level Sense spell wore off and Harry used the opportunity to escape the crowd. Now he saw he was somewhere near Dock 3 and he decided to head toward the center of town.

While walking he saw Ethan out of the corner of his eye. Since he was still invisible he followed the SeeD. When Ethan went behind a

hanger on the dock he looked to around to be sure he was alone and pulled out a Comm.

“Bastian.” Said Ethan “I’m sure you know we’re in town now, just wanted to tell you not to worry it’s only for some repairs and then they’ll be gone.”

Harry was a bit surprised by this. He knew that Bastian was branded a traitor by Garden and he was sure almost everyone believed him to be guilty. The fact that Ethan had just given the mercenary a heads up was interesting.

“I’m on a mission, so I won’t be able to give you much inside info on Garden for a while.” Said Ethan into the comm. Harry inched closer to hear better while the SeeD continued talking unaware of his presence. “It’s hard to say.” He said answering a question “I have to be an escort to someone. You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

Harry smirked at the irony of that statement. If only Ethan knew. As Ethan was about to answer another question Harry decided to make his presence known. “Well- Hey give that back.” Said Ethan as Harry took the comm. from him.

“Bastian.” Said Harry in greeting.

“Harry?” He heard Bastian’s voice ask disbelievingly

“Ethan works for you?” Asked the wizard “That is a coincidence.”

“What the hell?” Ethan yelled trying to get his comm. back. “How’d you get away from Andrea?”

“I have my ways.” Said Harry “Listen Bastian where can I meet you for the delivery?”

“Take it to the abandoned Sphere theatre past dock ten at 22:00.” Said Bastian “And bring Ethan you both have some explaining to do.”

“Sure thing.” Said Harry

Harry ended the call and handed Ethan back his communicator. "Well this is ironic." Said Harry "If I had known you worked for him I'd have told you about what was in the cargo."

"You mean the stuff in that trunk is for Chaos Flame?" Asked Ethan shocked

"Yeah." Said Harry "It's what we found doing a dig that Bastian put up some charter money for. "

"So how did you get away from Andrea?" Asked Ethan as they headed back toward the center of town.

"She let me go on the grounds that I left the trunk with Sheyna." Said Harry "That crowd was getting violent."

"I could see that coming." Said Ethan chuckling "So much for keeping a low profile huh?"

"Tell me about it." Said Harry "I thought I wouldn't have this problem away from home, but I guess I'm doomed to be in the spotlight."

"Some people are just like that." Said Ethan "At least you don't let it go to your head."

"Yeah." Said Harry "Although everyone doesn't always see it that way."

"You can't please everyone." Said Ethan "There's always someone who won't like you whether it be for a trivial reason or something legit there's always one."

"I know what you mean." Said Harry "I've got a lot of enemies back home."

"Yeah I read the transcript of Andrea's interrogation." Said the SeeD "You've got it pretty bad man."

"And I didn't even go into great detail with that." Said Harry "You guys got the abridged version."

Ethan didn't respond and they walked in silence the rest of the way to the stadium in the middle of the city. They found Andrea and Sheyna waiting for them and together the group headed towards a Hotel to get rooms for the night.

...

Bastian Dream sat in his quarters at the hideout of his own mercenary guild, Chaos Flame. He was in deep thought about the shipment that was due to him in a few days. He was wondering if it was going to get here. He'd heard about the ship being sunk by the Black Wings and he had thought that Sheyna and Harry would be on it. Then he saw the spherecast of the Blitzball Championships and had seen Harry go up against his own brother. That had thrown both him and Sophia for a loop, not to mention losing him a good deal of money for the bet he'd placed on the Aurocs. The highlight of that day though had been Harry's battle with the sphere monster. He was shocked at how much Harry had improved in such a short time. The power he'd displayed had been incredible and more than a few people were looking for who they now hailed as the 'Blitzball Hero'.

He also had other things on his mind. Only half of the people that were supposed to show up at headquarters had actually arrived. He'd found out through word of mouth and a few first hand accounts that some had been killed and others had been captured. This wasn't good news at all because it meant someone knew who his people were and that someone was severely cutting his number. Thankfully for him none of his key people had been compromised.

Most people saw Chaos Flame as a group of thugs that took on any job. This however wasn't true. They had a goal and that goal was to do everything in their power to stop Baron from taking over Spira. This was Bastian's home country and he would be damned if he let someone take it over. Whenever they got a hold of information they passed it to a leak they had inside Garden and they would in turn pass it back. He hadn't heard from Ethan in a while and he hoped that his friend hadn't been discovered. He was the only other person besides Sophia that believed him to be innocent.

It had been through Ethan that he'd been able to start Chaos Flame. His friend had given him the names of people that would be likely to help him from the SeeD database. After that it had been a simple matter of arranging meetings with the people and coming to a mutual compromise which suited everyone's interests. For the moment though he was at a standstill thanks to recent events and he hoped Harry or Sheyna would contact him soon and let him know when to expect the delivery.

His musings were cut short by a knock on the door.

"Come in." He said turning to face the door. Sophia walked in followed by a man wearing a long black trenchcoat, dark sunglasses and sporting blonde hair and a matching goatee.

"Sophia, Cruise." Greeted Bastian as they entered

"Morning Bastian." Said Cruise "I'm here for my report."

"I'm here to tell you that Bessaid Garden just docked in the harbor." Said Sophia

"Interesting." Said Bastian "Alright Cruise report."

"Word is that Baron is looking for some kind of key to do what I have no idea." Said Cruise "There's also word that they've made some pretty nasty alliances, but again the details are sketchy at best."

"Could you stake your life on this information's accuracy?" Asked Bastian

"Yes I can." Said Cruise "I'll work on getting more details, in the mean time I suggest you do whatever it was you said would get us more weapons and Gill."

"I'm working on it." Said Bastian "Just waiting for a call." As if on cue a small device on his desk started beeping and he picked it up. "Dream." He said in greeting.

“Bastian.” Said Ethan “I’m sure you know we’re in town now, just wanted to tell you not to worry it’s only for some repairs and then they’ll be gone.”

“Thanks Ethan.” Said Bastian “Wait you said they not we?”

“I’m on a mission, so I won’t be able to give you much inside info on Garden for a while.” Said Ethan

“How long?” Asked Bastian

“Hard to say.” Said Ethan “This isn’t a normal mission.”

“Details?” Asked Bastian

“I have to be an escort to someone.” Said Ethan “You wouldn’t believe me if I told you.”

“Try me.” Said Bastian

“Well- Hey give that back.” He heard Ethan say

“Bastian.” Said another voice and Bastian couldn’t believe who it was.

“Harry?” He asked disbelievingly

“Ethan works for you?” Asked the wizard “That is a coincidence.”

“What the hell?” He heard Ethan say in the background “How’d you get away from Andrea?”

“I have my ways.” Said Harry “Listen Bastian where can I meet you for the delivery?”

“Take it to the abandoned Sphere theatre past dock ten at 22:00.” Said Bastian “And bring Ethan you both have some explaining to do.”

“Sure thing.” Said Harry

Bastian ended the call more than a little confused. Ethan said he was escorting someone and Harry was with him. This could mean any number of things, but the one thing that worried him was that Andrea was also around. She unlike Ethan and Sophia believed him a traitor and if they ran into each other it would make things complicated.

...

Later that night Harry and Ethan were getting ready to leave the Hotel when they were stopped by Andrea.

"And where are you two off to?" She asked

"I'm taking Harry here to see some of the city sites." Said Ethan "Just because we're on a mission doesn't mean we can't have a little fun."

"Well if you're going I'm not staying here." Said Sheyna

"Fine by me." Said Harry "Coming Andrea?"

"I think I'll head into town and check my EFN account." Said Andrea "I'm sure Ethan can handle himself. Try to avoid your fan club Potter."

"I'll try." Said Harry

"I'll meet you back here later then." Said Andrea "Don't stay out too late we're doing some training tomorrow morning and you still need to tell me about where you're delivering that parcel."

"Yeah we'll talk later." Said Harry

The trio made their way toward Dock 10 and the abandoned Sphere Theatre. While they were walking Sheyna began to question the two men.

"So what town sites are down this way Ethan?" Asked Sheyna

"The old Sphere Theatre." Said the Seed

“We’re making the drop Sheyna.” Said Harry “Ethan here knows Bastian and has been giving him info about Garden ever since he left SeeD.”

“What about Andrea?” Asked Sheyna

“She’d be pretty mad if she knew what I was doing.” Said Ethan
“Which is why I really don’t want her to find out.”

“What are we gonna tell her tomorrow?” Asked Sheyna “I mean she knows that there are metal cases in the trunk. And with all the security that was on the truck and on each case it’s obvious that whatever is in them is very sensitive.”

“I’ll think of something.” Said Harry

They reached the abandoned Theatre and when they got there they found Bastian and Sophia waiting for them each wearing all black and carrying a sword and crossbow respectively. There were three other people all wearing masks and looking at the new arrivals intently.

“Glad to you made it.” Said Bastian “Let’s see them.”

“Right.” Said Sheyna “Harry open it.”

Harry sat the trunk down and tapped it. It expanded to normal size and he opened the lid to reveal the numerous metal cases inside. Harry handed each case to Sheyna who would release the lock and opened the case. The first case contained a large amount of gold and Bastian’s eyes went wide when he saw it.

“I don’t remember finding much of this.” He commented

“You wouldn’t.” Said Harry “I found a big room full of it my first day as point man. I nearly got killed by the flans in there.”

“You’ll have to tell me how that went.” Said Bastian

The next case was full of short swords and daggers. These were in remarkably good condition despite their age and Sheyna explained

they were made of Mythril and that was a metal that had mystical properties.

"These will come in handy." Said Sophia "How do you like them Von?"

One of the masked figures gave the blades a speculative look.

"Are you sure their real?" He asked suspiciously looking tat Harry

"If their fake I had nothing to do with it." Said Harry defensively

"I never said you did." Said the masked man.

"You thought it though." Said Harry

"Let's just move on." Said another one of the masked people this time a woman.

"Sheila's right." Said Bastian "Let's keep looking."

The next few cases were more gold and then they came to a case full of guns.

"Hey I don't remember seeing these." Said Sheyna surprised

"Your dad made me promise not to mention them." Said Harry
"Something about having too many firearms already or something."

Sheyna simply mumbled something that sounded like "Meddlesome old fart." And they continued on. They found many more weapons including, swords, spears, shirkens and even, much to Sheyna's pleasure and annoyance, more guns. There were also a few more cases containing gold.

"We did loose one though." Said Harry "We had to leave it in the Thunder Planes with the truck."

“Where the hell have you guys been anyway?” Asked Bastian. “Know what let’s talk back at headquarters this place isn’t exactly the most secure location.”

“You’re bringing them back to base?” Asked the other masked figure who had been silent thus far

“We can trust them Shade.” Said Sophia

“What about him?” Asked Von pointing to Ethan “He is a SeeD.”

“He’s fine.” Said Bastian “They aren’t security risks and they may even help us.”

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves.” Said Sheyna “We don’t even know what you’re doing.”

“I’m sure you’ll agree to help us after we talk to you.” Said Sophia “There are some things you guys need to know.”

“That’s fine.” Said Harry “But we can’t stay too long or our keeper will get suspicious.”

“Yeah.” Said Ethan “The last thing we need is for Andrea to get wind of this.”

“It shouldn’t take anymore than two hours.” Said Bastian “How is she doing anyway?”

“She’s her usual stoic self.” Said Ethan “She flares up every now and then but it’s mostly all business with her these days.”

“Well you can blame Antym for that.” Said Bastian “He was the one that always brought her out of her shell. I hope the bastard rots in hell for what he did.”

Nothing else was said and the group followed the members of Chaos Flame to their headquarters each holding their own thoughts.

...

Andrea walked through the dark streets of the worst part of the city. She may not have been ordered to look into the information regarding Chaos Flame, but this was too good of an opportunity to simply waste. With Ethan keeping Harry and Sheyna occupied there was no reason why she couldn't do some scouting and then be back at the hotel before they even returned. Wanting to get a better view of her surroundings she climbed a nearby fire escape and vaulted onto the roof. She saw a group of dark clad figures walking around on the street below her and decided to follow them. She jumped from roof to roof taking care not to make too much noise lest she be spotted. There were eight figures and from this distance she couldn't tell what they looked like. One of the figures stepped forward once the group reached what appeared to be a run down bar. The figure went to the left side of the door and hit a few buttons on the wall. A trap door opened up and the group descended down. The trap door closed behind them and Andrea jumped from the roof she was on using an Aero spell to lessen the impact of her fall. She needed to find a way in and the trap door wasn't an option. She went into the run down building and looked around cautiously. There wasn't much in there aside from some broken tables and chairs and a bar that held empty and broken bottles. She went out of the back door of the building and came out into another alleyway. There was a man standing in front of a doorway wearing all black. She wasted no time and crept up behind the man and gripped him around the neck tightly. She withdrew a long knife from its hiding place in her jacket and pressed it to the man's throat.

"What do you know about Chaos Flame?" She asked menacingly

"I don't know what the hell you're talking about." Said the man "So you can take your knife and shove it up your ass."

"Wrong answer." Said Andrea pressing the knife into the man's throat so that it made a shallow cut that immediately started bleeding. "Now I'll ask you again. What do you know about Chaos Flame?"

In response the man delivered a vicious elbow to her sternum and she crumpled slightly and her grip on the man's neck loosened. He capitalized by head butting her in the face. The impact of the blow

caused a sickening crunch and she was very much aware of a broken nose. The man turned around and had a gun pointed at her in a second.

“Now why would you be asking about things that don’t concern you?”
Asked the man

“Last chance.” Said Andrea gripping her gunblade handle ready to pull it from its sheath in a moments notice.

“Don’t even think about it.” Said the man “By the time you draw that I’ll have unloaded a whole clip right into that pretty little head of yours.”

“Think so?” Asked the SeeD. She started to pull out her gunblade while casting a Protect spell with her other hand which still held the knife. The man started to fire the second she had started pulling out her blade, but fortunately for her the Protect spell deflected the bullets harmlessly into a nearby wall.

“Magic.” Said the man “No materia so you’re either a white mage who’s good with a gunblade or a SeeD. I’m going to say the latter since white mages don’t usually carry those things around.” He shot off another round which the SeeD avoided before she rushed forward and smacked his gun arm with the flat of her gunblade. The weapon was knocked to the ground and she hit the man with a Stop spell. He stood in an awkward position with one leg slightly raised as if about to step backwards and one arm reaching for the other which was starting to swell from the obviously broken thumb and forefinger.

“Now I’ll ask you one more time.” Said Andrea “What do you know about Chaos Flame?” She removed the Stop spell and the man overbalanced and fell on the ground. Her gunblade was pointed directly at his throat and she backed him against a wall and leered down at him threateningly.

“Okay.” Said the man “I’m a member. We work to stop Baron from taking over Spira since you people won’t do anything about it and Maester Griddock is a complete idiot.”

“Nice story.” Said Andrea “But I want the truth.”

“That is the truth.” Said the man desperately.

“Suppose I believe you.” Said Andrea “How would I get into your headquarters, and think hard before you answer because if you lead me into a trap I will be forced to kill you.”

“There’s an entrance inside the bar and outside it.” Said the man “The one on the outside is the main one and the one on the inside is usually deserted.”

“Show me.” Said Andrea grabbing the man and hauling him to his feet. She cast a quick Cura spell to repair the damage to her face and prodded the man like a cow into the direction of the bar. Once inside the man went behind the bar and moved an empty bottle of liquor out of the way. He hit a hidden switch and part of the bar slanted downward to reveal a stairway. “You first.” Ordered Andrea shoving the man forward.

They descended the stairs and when they reached the bottom they found themselves in a hallway that branched in two directions.

“You’ve been a big help, but now it’s time to say goodnight.” Said Andrea. She considered killing the man, but if what he said was true it wouldn’t be a good idea. If this group could be an ally against the Black Wings killing their members wouldn’t be a good wait to start diplomatic relations. She cast a Sleep spell instead and stashed the slumbering man at the top of the stairs. That spell would hold for a few hours and give her plenty of time to be in and out.

She went down the right hallway sticking close to the shadowed sections of the corridor and ready to subdue anyone who may come across her. She heard voices coming from down another hallway and headed in that direction. She eventually came to a walkway that overlooked a large empty room. She assumed it was a hanger of some sort and wondered why it was empty.

On the floor below her she saw the eight people she had seen before and now she could see that five of them were wearing all black while

the other three were wearing normal clothes. All three figures had black hair, but she couldn't see their faces from her position. One had a braid going down their back, while another had straight shoulder length hair. The last figure's hair seemed to defy the laws of physics as it stuck in every conceivable angle in an unruly mess. She recognized it instantly and came to a shocking realization. It was Harry!

This meant that the other two had to be Sheyna and Ethan, but what could they possibly be doing with members of Chaos Flame?

"You must wait and see." Said Quazicotl throwing in one of its rare comments. Some GF were very vocal with their junctioners while others like Quazicotl hardly ever said anything.

She started listening to the conversation and was shocked again when she recognized two more voices.

"So this is our illustrious headquarters." Said Bastian in a false official voice. "You've seen the main entrance and the vault where we stored the weapons, this is the hanger."

"Why's it empty?" Asked Harry looking around the vast chamber.

"We don't have an airship to put in it." Said Sophia "And that's what it's for."

"How'd you get a place like this anyway?" Asked Ethan

"It belongs to my family actually." Said Bastian "My dad showed it to me and my brother before I left for SeeD training and after I left Garden I decided to put it to some good use."

"Yeah you said you were going to explain that." Said Harry

"Right." Said Bastian "Chaos Flame was founded for one purpose and one purpose only. Protect Spira from anyone who threatens it."

"So that's what you need the weapons for." Said Sheyna "The gold too I guess."

“Right in one.” Said Bastian “We have contacts in a lot of places. Like Ethan here. He actually helped me out a lot being my only contact inside Garden.”

Andrea was seething inside at this particular bit of information. She wanted to go down and rip Ethan a new one, but managed to restrain herself and listen to the conversation.

“Then we have others that are stationed in a few other key places.” Continued Bastian “Recently though we’ve been losing people.”

“You said you wanted our help?” Asked Harry

“Well you’ve helped a lot with the shipment and we appreciate it.” Said Bastian “The thing is we need all the man power we can get for a job we’ve got coming up.”

“I’m listening...” Said Harry and it was clear in his voice he knew what was coming.

“Well I know you’ve got some skills in certain areas.” Said Bastian “And as this mission requires a lot of stealth...”

“Get to the point.” Said Harry

“Fine.” Said Bastian “There’s a guy in town named Giran Ronso. He collects a lot of rare artifacts and one of the things he recently got in his possession is an Ultima Materia.”

“A what!” Asked a shocked Sheyna “Those are the rarest magic materia out there. Where the hell did he find one?”

“Our sources say he found it in the mako swamp in Gaea.” Said Sophia

“Isn’t that where those really nasty fiends live?” Asked Ethan

Andrea knew the area in question. It was located near the western coast of Gaea near the center of the continent. There was a lot of

mako there, so much so that the fiends in the area had become extremely powerful and most people didn't dare to set foot there.

"That's the place." Said Bastian "But now that he's done all the work of removing it for us..."

"I'm not helping you steal it." Said Harry

"You don't understand Harry." Said Sophia "Giran is suspected to have ties to the Black Wings. They've already got a GF on their side that could destroy an entire city if ordered to and we can't let them get their hands on an Ultima Materia."

"I still can't do it." Said Harry "I still haven't figured out how I'm going to explain the lack of stuff in my trunk to Andrea let alone who I'm supposed to give it to."

"I thought you said you'd think of something." Said Sheyna accusingly

"Well I'm still thinking!" Said Harry. He looked around the room once gain and his eyes passed over Andrea's position. The SeeD thought she saw him wink at her but he had passed over her position before she could determine it. "Instead of criticizing me why don't you try and think up something as well?"

"I've got nothing." Said Sheyna

"Me either." Said Ethan "Shit."

The SeeD in question was still trying to process the information she'd just heard. It seemed as though they were telling the truth which meant that she'd been wrong about Bastian. Ethan was a pretty good actor. She'd believed he too thought their once best friend was a traitor and now it seemed he had simply been playing a role in order to garner information more easily. It was a credit to his skill that she hadn't seen through it. There was another question running through her mind at the present though. What should she do now?

She could report everything she'd heard back to Commander Raynor like she was supposed to. But he would simply send in a team to

arrest Bastian for conspiring to overthrow the government. Ethan would be tried for treason against Garden and Harry and Sheyna would once again be arrested. Everyone else here would probably be detained as well and that wouldn't do anyone any good. It was rare for her to disregard orders and a part of her really didn't want to, but sometimes things had to be done for the greater good. Giran Ronso was a known supporter of the Black Wings. The only reason he hadn't been arrested was because there wasn't sufficient evidence to back the claims. She couldn't let him hand over the most powerful magic materia to the enemy.

"You've got quite the dilemma." Said Sophia "I wish you didn't have to come up with a lie, Andrea would be really helpful with this mission."

"She won't believe me." Said Bastian sadly "I tried to explain it to her but all she did was glare at me."

"She glared at you?" Said Harry "If she glared at me I'd run. And that's saying something as I've faced a lot of death glares."

"I wanted to." Said Bastian "She looked like she was ready to pull out her gunblade and decapitate me or something."

"Actually I was going to castrate you at the time, but I thought better of it." Said Andrea making her presence known. "Ethan you do know that treason is punishable by death right?"

"Andrea...I...Um..." Sputtered Ethan

"You guys just now noticed her?" Asked Harry a bit surprised "I saw the light off her gunblade when I was looking around the room. I'm actually surprised she didn't come out sooner."

"You saw me?" Asked Andrea a little shocked

"Yeah." Said Harry "I figured it was useless trying to hide what we were doing at that point so I ignored you and let you listen."

Andrea jumped off the walkway and landed a few feet away from the assembled group.

“Great more SeeDs” Said Von contemptuously.

“So you heard it all then?” Asked Bastian losing his cheerful demeanor.

“I did.” Said Andrea “You need better security outside. That guy was a pushover.”

“You got by Higgs?” Asked Sophia “He must be slipping.”

“He put up a fight.” Said Andrea “But now he’s asleep at the top of your bar entrance.”

“You killed him!” Asked Sheila angrily

“I said asleep not dead.” Said Andrea “I see why you wouldn’t tell the commander about the cargo now.”

“Yeah that would have been awkward.” Said Sheyna “We’re taking a large amount of weapons to a vigilante group please let us go.” She said mockingly

“If you’re planning on reporting any of this I can’t let you leave.” Said Bastian

“Is that a threat?” Asked Andrea

“I’m only stating facts.” Said Bastian “I can’t have SeeD knowing where my headquarters is. Just surrender and I can still treat you humanely.”

“And if I refuse.” Said Andrea gripping her gunblade tightly

“Do we really have to do this?” Asked Sophia

“He’s the one threatening me.” Said Andrea

“You’re the one that waltzed in here uninvited and attacking my people.” Said Bastian

"Well maybe you should have kept a lower profile." Said Andrea "A bunch of people wearing all black creeping around in the middle of the night is bound to draw attention."

"Last chance Andrea." Said Bastian "Drop the gunblade or else."

"Hey guys..." Started Harry but he was ignored

"I will not be threatened by the likes of you Dream." Said Andrea

"So it's Dream now?" Asked Bastian "All those years of friendship just tossed aside. Why can't you believe me?"

"Guys..." Said Harry again but again he was ignored by the arguing duo

"Who says I don't believe you?" Asked Andrea "I've thought about it and I realize that the evidence against you was circumstantial. Just because Antym did betray Garden doesn't mean you did."

"So if you believe me why are you going to report this all back to Garden?" Asked Bastian

"No one said I was." Said Andrea "You just started threatening me."

"Guys you do realize that you've kind of drawn a crowd right?" Asked Harry. The two of them looked around and saw that the hanger was now crowded with quite a few people.

"There she is!" Said Higgs coming to the front of the crowd and pointing angrily at Andrea.

"Someone must have found you." Said Andrea "Too bad I was hoping to avoid an all out confrontation."

"Isn't it a little late for that?" Asked Ethan "I mean you were confronting Bastian just a second ago."

"I meant with the whole group." Said Andrea

"It's alright guys." Said Bastian "She's fine. Aren't you?"

"I won't mention this to the commander if that's what you mean." Said Andrea "Although I will tell him about the Ultima Materia."

"No you won't." Said Von "SeeD isn't trustworthy either, there are things going on at the other gardens that suggest corruption in the higher ups."

"How dare you suggest..." Started Andrea but Ethan cut her off.

"It's true Andrea." Said Ethan "Things aren't as clean as they seem. There was some kind of big cover up a while back and there are some people in central command that can't be trusted."

"How do you know?" Asked Andrea "We're the same rank and neither of us has clearance to know that kind of thing."

"Clearance is only a minor detail." Said Ethan "A little maneuvering goes a long way in cyberspace."

"You hacked the network." Said Andrea "I'm not really surprised. Fine I won't report the Ultima Materia, but I want to help."

"You serious?" Said Bastian

"Do I look like I'm joking?" Andrea shot back "I know that Giran Ronso is affiliated with the Black Wings all I need to do is find some kind of evidence and get it back to command. There may be corruption, but they should still do their duty once they have the information."

"Just keep Chaos Flame out of it." Said Bastian "How about you Harry will you help?"

"I've got nothing better to do." Said Harry "Although after we're done I want to start looking for someone."

"Sheyna?" Asked Sophia

“Stealth isn’t really my strong suit.” Said Sheyna “Since the cargo is delivered I really don’t need to stick around here.”

“Sorry but you do.” Said Andrea “You know a lot of information and we can’t let a security risk like you run around on your own.”

“She’s right Sheyna.” Said Ethan “They’ve seen you with Harry and they could use you to try and get to him.”

“See I told you I’ll only...” Started Harry

“I don’t want to hear it again Harry.” Said Sheyna “I knew what I was doing when I decided to help you.”

“Well it is getting pretty late.” Said Bastian “If you guys want to help then meet back in the bar in two days and we’ll discuss our plans.”

The assembled people in the hanger started to disperse and soon all that remained was the foursome and the five members of Chaos Flame that had met Harry, Sheyna and Ethan at the sphere theatre.

“Before you go guys.” Said Bastian “We’ve got a little test for you.”

“What the?” Said Harry when all the members of Chaos Flame pulled out weapons. Bastian had a new sword to replace the one he’d broken during the fight with Seth, Sophia had a her crossbow, Sheila pulled out a scimitar and Von and Shade both withdrew bow staffs which were much like Ethan’s except that they held a large variety of materia in each one.

“You want to fight us?” Asked Harry

“We need to be sure you won’t slow us down.” Said Bastian “I saw what you can do versus a fiend, but let’s see you fight another person.”

“Have it your way.” Said Andrea “This is as good a time to get some practice is as any.”

"All we do is fight, fight, fight." Said Sheyna "Can't we ever catch a break?"

"Nope." Said Harry "Try not to hurt them too much guys." With that said he turned invisible after drawing his sword and was gone from sight.

Shade and Von immediately started casting spells on the entire group ranging from Firaga to a massive poison spell. Andrea rushed Bastian and the two were engaged in a fight of blade versus blade. Sophia fired bolts at Ethan and Sheyna who were concentrating on defensive magic to counteract the spells used against them. It seemed that their opposition had forgotten about the invisible wizard but remembered when they heard "Accio Chaos Flame's Weapons!" The assortment of arms was ripped from the mercenaries hands and went flying up to the walkway surrounding the top of the hanger. Harry stood at the top smirking triumphantly.

"Looks like we win." He said "Unless you want to try and fight us unarmed."

"Cheater." Muttered Bastian "Offworlder magic wasn't what I meant by seeing how you handled yourself."

"There are no rules in a real fight." Said Andrea "Suck it up and take the loss."

"Go to hell Pryde." Said Bastian

"Well that's that." Said Harry "I'll just leave these up here for you guys."

"How the hell did you get all the way up there?" Asked Von

"Jumped." Said Harry

"But that's like fifty feet!" Protested Shade

"What the hell have you got junctioned?" Asked Ethan

“Just a few Ultima spells.” Said Harry

“You have Ultima?” Asked Andrea “When we scanned you for junctions all we found is an unidentified GF and a few low level spells.”

“I don’t know why that’s all you found.” Said Harry “Not like I was trying to hide it.”

“Let’s just go.” Said Sheyna “I’ve had enough for one day.”

...

Merlin walked through the nether portions of Crystal Citadel. He was awaiting the arrival of Ollivander and he knew that the old wizard would try to sneak up on him. It turned out he was correct because a second later he was startled by the man’s voice.

“Are the preparations complete?” Asked Ollivander.

“Would it kill you to approach someone without surprising them?”
Asked Merlin

“I could.” Said Ollivander “But this way is much more interesting.”

“To answer your question everything is in order.” Said Merlin “Zidane knows what we are doing though.”

“Does he now?” Asked Ollivander “And what did the genome have to say about it?”

“He told me to stop trying to interfere and that if I kept meddling there would be consequences.” Said Merlin

“I don’t suppose he specified?” Asked Ollivander

“Of course not.” Said Merlin “He only said that he wouldn’t do anything to me directly.”

“Well that doesn’t exactly narrow it down now does it?” Said Ollivander

“No.” Said Merlin “Although I won’t be deterred, I just hope whatever he does can be combated once it is done.”

“He is very ambitious.” Said Ollivander “It is a shame what fate has made of him.”

“He was a victim of circumstances.” Said Merlin “His plight seems to have driven him insane. What he’s trying to do can not and should never be done.”

“Have you considered what will happen if he succeeds?” Asked Ollivander

“I shudder to think.” Said Merlin “I had to choose to side with him to make sure that our world wasn’t destroyed by Voldemort, but I still don’t agree with what he’s doing. Isn’t it enough for him to control the judgment of souls?”

“I suppose not.” Said Ollivander “It is a tedious and trying process that never ends. He never wanted it, but the task was thrust upon him.”

“Well time is synchronized.” Said Merlin “It will happen in two days.”

“Let us hope for the best then.” Said Ollivander

...

Two days later found the foursome back in the deserted bar. They were met by Bastian, Sophia and Shade. This time the latter had his hood back and long brown hair could be seen as well as crimson colored eyes.

“Okay.” Said Bastian “I know I said we’d plan today, but what I really meant was we’d tell you our plan and execute it tonight.”

"We can't work like that." Said Andrea "You said this would be planning not pre-mission briefing."

"Plans change." Said Bastian "My contacts say that Giran will be handing over the materia tomorrow, so tonight is our first and last chance to nab it."

"I hope you've got a good plan then." Said Harry

"Don't worry I do." Said Bastian. He pulled out a duffle bag and handed each person a small device that fit into their ear. "These little babies will allow us to communicate without it being overheard. All you need to do is whisper and these will transmit it to everyone else's communicator." He reached back into the bag and pulled out a rectangular device which had a screen on it. "This thing will make a blueprint of whatever building you set it on when you activate it. It's linked to the communicators and will show the position of whoever has one within the blueprint. The last thing is that it after it makes the blueprint it can pick up body heat signatures and display them as well."

"How the hell did you get one of those?" Asked Andrea "That's Esharian technology."

"We have our ways." Said Shade mysteriously.

"Now I'll need someone to stay outside the compound and monitor this." Said Bastian "Sophia and I are already going in and Shade here has volunteered to guard whoever stays to monitor the scanner."

"Well I'm going in." Said Harry. "That thing looks a bit too complex for me to deal with."

"I'm going in as well." Said Andrea "Technology isn't my strong suit."

"I'll use it." Said Ethan "I'm good with stuff like this."

"I'll stay with and watch your back then." Said Sheyna "Like I said before stealth and me don't mix well."

“Alright.” Said Bastian “We move out in one hour. Everyone have all your junctions and materia set?”

“You’ve got junctions?” Asked Andrea “I don’t even want to know how you got a GF.”

“Good because I won’t tell you.” Said Bastian

“Guys now is not the time for another argument.” Said Sophia

“Right we’re heading to the residence of Giran Ronso.” Said Shade “The place is like a fortress. To even get into the grounds we’ll have to take out the front gate guards as silently as possible. After that we’ll have to snipe the guards off of the roof. Since only one of us can turn invisible.” At this he looked at Harry “It’ll have to be you who does the sniping.”

“I don’t know how to use a gun.” Said Harry “I’d miss and give us away.”

“Well then you’ll have to do the hands on approach.” Said Bastian “Get up there and take them out quickly and silently. Once those guards are gone we’ll sneak around to the cellar entrance. After that we’ll be flying blind until the blueprint scanner is set.”

“I don’t believe it.” Said Andrea “You actually have a slightly solid plan.”

“I learned from the best.” Said Bastian giving her a meaningful look.

“I wasn’t sure if you were even paying attention.” Said Andrea “Looks like your just full of surprises Bastian.”

An hour later found the group assembled a few blocks away from the residence of Giran Ronso. Harry shifted into invisibility and approached the gate. He saw that there were four guards, two on each side of the gate. The gate was about twelve feet high and Harry used his augmented muscles to jump easily over the gate and land on the other side silently. Instead of stunning the guards he hit them with a sleep spell that caused them to stay standing. After all of them

were asleep he followed it up with a stunner and dragged them off to the side. He could see a large mansion in the distance and he could make out some blurred shapes on the roof thanks to his improved night vision.

He crept quietly toward the house careful not to tread too hard on the rocky ground lest he be noticed. Once he reached the side of the house he jumped to a balcony of a second floor window and from there he jumped onto the roof. Once there he made quick work of the guards and checked the surroundings for more guards. He saw a few scattered throughout the grounds and a few well aimed stunners took care of them.

"All clear." Whispered Harry

"Roger." Said Bastian into his ear. "We're heading to the cellar entrance on the south side of the house."

"Right." Said Harry

He reached the cellar entrance and waited for the rest of the group. Once everyone was there Ethan put the blueprint scanner on the wall of the house and activated it. It took several minutes for the machine to scan the interior of the mansion, but when it was done they found it had been well worth the wait. The scan showed the layout of the two main floors and an additional four floors that were located underground.

"We'll have to split up." Whispered Bastian "We'll each take a floor and see what we can find. Harry you take the bottom floor since you can hide the best. Sophia you take the first basement, Andrea you do the second and I'll take the third."

"Alright." Said Harry "What should I do if I find the materia?"

"Don't touch it." Said Bastian "Tell us and we'll be there to help you get it out. There's bound to be some heavy security around it."

"Looks like they've got some laser alarms on those basement floors." Said Ethan looking at the scanner. "I'll watch out for you guys and tell

you when you get close to them. There's also an area on each floor where the scanner won't penetrate. I'd say that whatever their hiding is located in that area."

"Right." Said Bastian "Everyone be careful and if your caught just worry about getting out. These guys are all hired thugs so if you can't avoid killing them that's alright."

Harry was a little taken aback by the mercenaries disregard for human life, but then he remembered his own disregard during the battle on the ship and realized that sometimes killing was just necessary no matter how much he despised it.

"You're learning." Commented Seth "It's about time."

Harry ignored the serpent and followed the group into the mansion. Their black body suits let them blend in well with the shadowed corridors and they eventually found an air duct that would allow them to enter the lower levels. Harry went first and headed straight down past the other three vents until he was at the bottom of the shaft. Through the bars he could see three guards patrolling the area and he turned himself invisible to avoid immediate detection. He cast an unlocking charm on the vent and carefully slid it aside. The guards didn't seem to notice anything and Harry capitalized on this. He considered briefly whether to stun or kill and decided on kill. If something went wrong there'd be three less guards to worry about. He wasn't up to casting Avada Kadavra so he simply made quick precise cuts with his sword severing the soldiers' wind pipes and vocal chords.

"Potter in." He whispered

"Pryde in." He heard Andrea say

"Terone in position." Said Sophia

"Dream in." He heard Bastian say. "Try to avoid as many guards as you can and head to the area that the scanner couldn't see. Ethan you're going to have to guide us."

“Don’t worry I’m here.” Said Ethan “Harry head down the corridor to your right. There are four heat signatures that way and a few laser alarms set onto the floor.”

“Can you tell how high?” Asked Harry

“About a foot off the floor.” Said Ethan

“Alright.” Said Harry “Good thing I drew those Float spells in the training center.” He said to himself.

He headed down the corridor after casting the Float spell and he saw the guards Ethan had mentioned. He glided up to them silently and made a sweeping arch with his sword. The narrow hallway didn’t give much room for the guards to disperse themselves and the four fell with one stroke. Harry realized that the bodies might trigger the alarms on the floor and banished them before they hit the ground. He didn’t know what the others would do to prevent this, but he wasn’t going to be the one to cost them the mission.

He continued in this fashion avoiding laser alarms and dispatching guards as he went while following Ethan’s directions. Sometimes he had to wait for the SeeD to respond since he was guiding the other three as well as himself.

“Okay Harry you should see a set of double door straight ahead.” Said Ethan “Beyond there you’ll be on your own.”

“Where are the others?” Asked Harry

“Bastian is right outside the doors on the second basement.” Said Ethan “Sophia will be at hers soon. And Andrea is already inside.”

“Any idea how I get these open?” Asked Harry

“Didn’t you ask a guard?” Asked Ethan

“Umm.” Said Harry intelligently “They kind of died.”

“Andrea says that the doors all lead to one huge room.” Said Ethan
“She says that the guards all have fingerprint clearance.”

“Ok.” Said Harry. He made his way back to one of the few bodies he hadn’t banished and took the dead man’s hand. He was trying not to think about how disgusted he was at this while he carried the severed appendage to the door. He placed it on the hand panel palm down and there was a beep followed by the door sliding open. He banished the hand and walked in still invisible. He looked around and saw a huge room which had several walkways above him. He saw stairs connecting each one and he also saw several guards walking around. The guards seemed to have heard the door open and looked in his direction. One of them came toward him and he stepped aside not wanting to be caught. The man looked around suspiciously before turning back to the other guards on the ground floor.

“What the hell is up with these doors today?” He asked “All four of them are malfunctioning.”

“We’ll have to tell the boss about it.” Said another guard “We’re here to guard the materia not do maintenance.”

“You’d think with all the money that beast has he’d have better doors.” Said the first guard

“Don’t let any ronso hear you call Master Giran a beast.” Said the yet another guard. “Come on let’s check the rock.”

Harry followed the guards deeper into the vast room and eventually they came to another set of locked doors. One of the guards put his face to a panel on the side of the door and a light scanned his retina. The doors slid open and Harry followed the guards inside. He saw a small green orb sitting on a podium with several lasers hitting it. There was a panel on the side of the podium but the guards went no further.

“I don’t know why we have to check it every hour.” Said the first guard complaining again. “It’s not like anyone is stupid enough to try and break in here.”

"You'd be surprised." Said one of his companions.

They left the room and shut the blast doors behind them. Harry was now trapped inside the room with the very thing he was trying to steal.

"I found it." He whispered.

"Where the hell are you?" Asked Ethan

"I'm on the bottom level of the large room behind a set of blast doors." Said Harry "There's a retinal scanner, but I think I can bypass it with an unlocking charm."

"Hold your position." Said Bastian "We'll be down there as soon as we can. We're all in the room right outside where you are, but the guards heard one of us and now they're searching the floors top to bottom. We're going to fight our way down to you."

"So you just want me to wait?" Asked Harry

"Actually grab the materia." Said Bastian "It'll take the heat off of us."

"Ok." Said Harry "Accio Materia!"

The magical orb flew from the podium and blasted right through the glass case surrounding it. The various lasers touched and immediately claxons started to blare all throughout the room. Sections of the walls in the room slid aside and soldiers wearing the uniform of the Black Wings started to pour into the room.

"Problems guys." Said Harry "Black wings are in here."

"Just hold on." Said Bastian "We've got our hands full."

"There's no way out!" Yelled a soldier "Show yourself and surrender and we might let you live."

"Desert Fury!" Yelled Harry summoning his guardian to deal with the battalion of soldiers. Seth appeared out of the sand whirlpool and created his whirlwind sucking all the soldiers into it. He threw the

chain and scythe into the tempest as well and they took on their ring shapes as he threw them. The room was filled with screams of pain and horror as the soldiers were shredded to bits. When the attack cleared over half of the original forty soldiers were no more. The survivors immediately started using their mage lances to fire spells around the room in hopes of catching a still invisible Harry. One of them got smart and cast a water spell that managed to soak the wizard and give away his position. Fifteen spells were immediately hurled straight at him, but a hastily thrown Reflect caused them to rebound and smack into their casters.

This cut down the number of soldiers even more and Harry took the head on approach and started slashing every soldier he could reach with his sword. He received a few cuts from their lances, but he managed to avoid any serious damage while still managing to defeat the remaining soldiers.

"We're right outside the door Harry." He heard Bastian say "Open it quick!"

Harry wasted no time and headed for the blast doors. He cast the strongest Alohamora he could manage and the doors slammed open. Once this was done he had to quickly duck a blast of energy from what looked like a cross between a fiend and some sort of machine. It had a cannon sticking out of each shoulder and another like a horn on its head. It looked reptilian in nature and had spikes running along its back and tail. It stood on two feet and its arms had vicious looking blades attached to them. He saw Andrea, Bastian and Sophia on the other side of the beast and a few levels above he saw more soldiers and some ronso. Among the ronso stood a particularly tall one. He had silver hair and his face was slightly wrinkled. He wore elaborate robes with several emblems on them. Harry assumed that this was Giran Ronso.

"You dare try to steal my materia?" Asked the ronso. Harry had expected him to talk in third person like Roland, but he did not. "I'll leave my pet here to deal with you. Krorg destroy them all!"

The beast roared in affirmative and spun around to attack the three fighters on his other side. He didn't forget about Harry though as the

wizard had to dodge the club-like tail as the creature swung it at him. He slashed at the offending limb and managed to take a good chunk out of it. The monster didn't even react instead it started firing at its other three opponents. Harry focused his power into the Contain Materia and cast a Freeze spell at the beast's head. The spell hit its mark, but when it dissipated the only noticeable affect was a bluish tinge to the monster's head.

Sophia fired crossbow bolts at it charged with ice energy. The bolts caused part of the monster's hide to freeze, but other than that it didn't seem to do any good. The soldiers hadn't left the area and were firing at the fighters from above. They cast Protect to shield themselves from the bullets but this distracted them from the monster. Krorg roared and shot a blast of energy from each of its cannons while spinning around. The blast burned some, but the Protect shielded most of the damage. The force however slammed the warriors against the walls and dazed them for a moment.

Andrea hit the monster with a Meltdown spell and the metal of its cannons along with its scales became brittle and soft. She followed this up with a Meteor spell. Bastian took this opportunity to cast a Quake spell on the soldiers a few floors above. The spell caused the walkway to break and sent the men plummeting to the ground some forty feet below.

"Let's get out of here!" Yelled Bastian.

"Guys we got problems." Said Ethan "There are soldiers everywhere we're pulling out!"

"Shake them off and get back to headquarters." Said Bastian "We'll meet you there."

The group charged up the scaffolding walkway and headed toward the top of the room. The Krorg wasn't finished off though and when the Meteor bombardment ended the beaten and bloodied beast charged after its prey. As Harry ran he started to notice a growing tingling in his scar. Soon the tingling became a roaring pain and he collapsed to the ground clutching his scar that was now bleeding.

“Harry!” Yelled Andrea

He wanted to respond but the pain was too great. Blood flowed from his scar like water and some of it hit the Ultima Materia in his free hand. When the magical blood came in contact with the materia the orb started to glow. A green aura surrounded Harry as if he was about to cast a spell.

“We’ve got to go!” Said Bastian “I don’t want to leave him but we can’t die here.”

“But.” Said Sophia

“He’s right Sophia.” Said Andrea “He wouldn’t want us to stay.” They continued running leaving the wizard screaming in agony as magic started to pulse all around him. The materia was glowing so brightly that it had a white tinge to the intense green. As Harry’s screams reached a crescendo the spell activated and the wizard’s scream blended with a sound that could only be described as the cry of the very planet itself. The monster stopped in its tracks and looked at the wizard with something akin to awe. The fleeing mercenaries glanced back and saw that an intense green light was spreading outward from Harry. All of them knew what this meant and doubled their efforts to escape.

When they reached the top they found the ronso waiting for them. The Ultima spell was still growing and the group simply charged straight through the beast men and continued out of the mansion. Down below Harry was in a great deal of pain. His scar felt as though it was gouging into his head and he could hear Tom laughing triumphantly. He lost his grip on reality as images started to blur into one another. Eventually all he could hear was the sound of the raging spell and Voldemort’s triumphant cackle.

A/N: Hope you all enjoyed the chapter. If anyone was concerned about why Harry can use wizarding magic easier than he could it is because he slowly got used to it. He's been there for a few months now so casting basic spells doesn't effect him anymore. He does still feel pain if he casts something like Avada Kadavra. Next chapter will

be back in the wizarding world, but the one after that will be Harry again.

Things That Make Nightmares

Severus Snape was heading toward the chambers of his master Lord Voldemort. He knew that this meeting wouldn't be pleasant as he hadn't yet found the Weasley girl. On top of that it was now one week until New Year's Eve. This wasn't his idea of a nice Christmas Eve. He knocked on the door and waited for a moment and finally he heard a hissing voice say "Enter Severus."

Snape glided into the room in his trademark fashion, bowed and kissed the hem of Voldemort's robes.

"What have you to report Severus?" Asked the Dark Lord

"We have been unable to locate the girl master." Said Severus

"I am aware of this." Said Voldemort "Rise Severus I am not in the mood to torture you now."

Snape was shocked. The Dark Lord never passed up an opportunity to torture one of his followers for a failure.

"Consider this your lucky day Severus." Said Voldemort. "My plans have been going extremely well recently aside from a few minor setbacks. With Potter and Dumbledore out of the picture the world is all but mine for the taking. Once I complete this ritual I will be unstoppable. That Severus is why I don't feel the need to torture you right now."

"I am most grateful master." Said Snape "We have searched all of Wizarding Britain save Hogwarts and she is nowhere to be found."

"And Muggle Britain?" Asked Voldemort

"It is difficult for us to maneuver there." Said Snape "Magic is so heavily tracked that if we used tracing charms we'd alert the Aurors."

"I see." Said Voldemort "I shall employ the Dementors."

“Won’t the Ministry notice a bunch of Dementors floating about Muggle London?”

“Crucio!” Said Voldemort pointing his wand at Snape who promptly began to scream and writhe on the floor in pain. “Just because I did not punish you for failure do not think that you can question my decisions. Maybe now you will know your place.” He broke the curse and Snape rose to a standing position panting heavily

“I apologize my lord.” Said Snape “I was merely concerned.”

“Your concern is valid.” Said Voldemort “However the Ministry is going to be otherwise occupied for the next week.”

“I see.” Said Snape “I await your orders master.”

“You will trail the Dementors.” Said Voldemort. “Once they’ve found the girl you will bring her to me.”

“Understood.” Said Snape “May I ask what the rest of the Death Eaters will be doing?”

“We will be taking a little trip.” Said Voldemort “We’re going to visit some friends in Azkaban.”

...

The last two weeks hadn’t been easy on Ginny. She had been trying to find a place to live besides the hotel because that was quickly eating away at her Muggle money. It seemed that no place in London had any vacancies and as it was the holiday season most people were away visiting family and this cut her prospects of available places to look dramatically. Eventually she managed to find a one bedroom flat that she could rent for about £500 a month. She had enough money to last her a few months without having to worry about going into Gringot’s and she figured that she could find a job somewhere to help with costs.

The books she’d bought had come in handy for her new home. She wasn’t an expert at warding, but by using the book she found that she

could cast the anti-muggle wards as well as the ones to keep out household pests. The ones to keep out other wizards and to regulate apparating would be more difficult to cast, but she was sure she'd eventually be able to do it, all she needed was time.

Her progress with the spell books was much better though. She had learned some particularly nasty hexes, like one to make exploding boils appear on the inside of someone's skin and another that would slowly grind a person's bones into powder. Although these were pretty dark spells she didn't have many qualms about using them should she come under attack. Her world was at war and she was sure that a Death Eater wouldn't think twice about killing her if they found her. Luckily for her she didn't see a reason why the Death Eaters would want to come after her, only the Ministry and possibly Ron.

Thinking of her brother brought both tears of sadness and anger to her eyes. He had obviously killed Hermione who had been one of her best friends and he was also responsible for Harry's disappearance of that she was sure. The brother she had known was gone and he was now replaced by a cold hearted monster. The worst part was that she knew that her Ron was still in there somewhere and that he was watching everything that Riddle made him do.

At the moment she was sitting in her sparsely furnished living room looking at her copy of *The Compendium of Harmful Magic*. The book was going into great detail about how to use household spells to harm people. There was one that was used to filet meat, the book described the possible effects of this spell should it be aimed at the human body. The next passage described what an ironing charm would do if cast on someone's face. This made her cringe some, but she remembered her resolve and continued studying the book for a while.

As interesting as this reading was she sat the book down and worked on something more important, Occlumency. She knew thanks to Tom that her connection to Voldemort would be stronger and he may be able to exploit it should he discover its existence. She wondered if the Dark Mark on her arm was connected to Lord Voldemort or the portion of his soul that was possessing Ron, as much as this question

boggled her, she wasn't sure whether she wanted to know the answer. So it was that she focused on the rudimentary training that she'd gone through with Harry, Ron and Hermione and tried clearing her mind being completely unaware of the growing chill in the air.

...

The fractured spirit of Tom Riddle was annoyed. His host was starting to put up quite a fight. It seemed that Ron's drive had been renewed and now Riddle was hard pressed to control the body.

"Just give up you filthy blood traitor." Hissed Tom

"Why don't you go back to hell where you belong?" Seethed Ron

"I like it here much better than you." Said Riddle "You're becoming quite an annoyance, do you know that?"

"If you don't like it leave." Said Ron attempting to gain some more control over his body.

"You can't win." Said Riddle "And if you keep trying I'll be forced to lock you away in the deepest corner of your mind while making you suffer unspeakable torture."

"Oh yeah?" Challenged Ron "Let's see you try."

"If you insist." Said Riddle using a good deal of power to push Ron's essence deeper into his own mind. The younger wizard tried to resist but even at partial strength he was no match for the Dark Lord. Soon enough Ron Weasley was securely sealed deep inside his own mind once more, and this time Riddle made sure he wasn't going to get out. He did however make sure that Ron could still see what he was doing and that was currently attending an Order meeting.

"All in favor of allowing Mr. Ron Weasley to join the Order of the Phoenix please raise your hand." Said McGonagall

The majority of the members raised their hands, all but Remus and Tonks raising their hands.

"It had been ruled in favor of allowing Ronald Weasley into the Order of the Phoenix." Said McGonagall formally "Welcome to the order Mr. Weasley."

"Thank you Professor." Said Ron

"Now down to business." Said Minerva "In light of the unfortunate events concerning Ms. Weasley and a great deal of the Auror department..." She trailed and the twins and Bill all got dark looks at Ginny's name. "It seems we overlooked a great risk to our security by leaving Ginny to her own devices. By underestimating the lure of the dark side we have given V-v-v-voldemort a very useful tool."

"This is preposterous!" Said Remus getting fed up with the proceedings. Riddle mentally smirked at the man's outburst. He was becoming a problem and would need to be dealt with if his plans to control the order were going to succeed. "I can't believe you people believe him." At this he pointed to Ron "You seem to overlook the fact that he was at all the supposed attacks when Ginny was supposed to have killed someone. He's also the only one to come back from Rome and you just believe what he says."

"I did submit to Verituserum Lupin." Said Ron "Are you trying to say that I somehow threw off the potion? That takes a very powerful Occlumens and while I did study a bit with Potter it was nowhere near the level needed to shake that potion."

"Remus have you any proof to base your claims?" Asked Minerva

"I just know." Said Remus "Call it intuition."

"Just like your intuition that Wormtail was a meek and kind man who died valiantly defending his friends?" Asked Ron bitinglly. Many people in the room gasped at this statement and the werewolf bolted from his seat and lunged at Ron. The young wizard flipped over the back of his seat and rolled backwards before springing to his feet and leveling his wand at Remus who already had his out.

“Gentlemen cease this at once!” Roared McGonagall “Ron that comment was uncalled for and Remus you must learn to control your temper. Now take your seats so that we can continue the meeting.”

Both men reluctantly took their seats all the while casting glares at each other from their respective seats across the meeting table.

“As I was saying.” Continued Minerva as if the outburst hadn’t occurred “We need to locate Ms. Weasley. This however isn’t at the top of our priority list, have any of you gathered information about the ritual that the Dark Lord is planning?”

“We know that it’s either a very ancient one or one that he’s concocting himself.” Said Kingsley “The only rituals I know that involve phoenixes and remains of bodies are ones that were meant to resurrect something or to increase someone’s power.”

“I think it is safe to assume that he isn’t trying to resurrect Voldemort.” Said Ron and he laughed mentally at the shudder that crossed the room at the sound of the name. “He’s most likely trying to increase his power.”

“But isn’t he already powerful enough?” Asked a frightened Elphias Doge

“Yes, with Dumbledore and Potter gone there isn’t really anyone who could hope to match his power.” Said Minerva “So why would he bother doing this?”

“That doesn’t matter.” Said Tonks speaking for the first time “The question is how do we stop him?”

“We don’t even know where he is.” Said Kingsley “Let alone how to stop him.”

“Well...” Started Minerva but she was cut off by several of the Order members, all Aurors and Ministry workers standing to their feet and looking at their watches.

“Trouble.” Said Kingsley

“Where?” Asked Minerva

“Azkaban.” Answered the Auror gravely. The Order immediately organized themselves and started appearing to the docks that housed the ferry to Azkaban. As Riddle looked at the dark fortress in the distance through Ron’s eyes he barely contained his glee. His counterpart was doing a good job in renewing his reign of terror. This was the start of something grand if Azkaban could be taken. For now though he needed to keep up appearances. He was sure that his counterpart would be here and when he met him the meeting would be very interesting.

...

The Dark Lord strode into the abolished gates of Azkaban Fortress. His forces poured in ahead of him shooting killing curses at the Aurors who were supposed to guard the prison. They were cut down quickly by the numerous curses and the group continued on. Voldemort had made a portkey which had taken his forces directly to the island bypassing the wards. His mission was simple; get into the prison, free his captured Death Eaters, get the other prisoners to join him, and turn the prison into his own personal stronghold. He knew the Ministry and the Order would be sending reinforcements soon, but they’d have to take the boats onto the island. This gave him plenty of time to work.

“Gather their wands.” He ordered his forces. “Draco, come here.”

Draco Malfoy approached his master nervously. Voldemort knew that the boy’s loyalty was wavering. He’d failed to kill Dumbledore, and while the Dark Lord had expected this he was still going to make the boy pay. “Yes master?” Asked Draco

“I have a special mission for you.” Said Voldemort “You have failed to prove yourself as a loyal Death Eater as of yet.”

“But my lord I- Ahh!” Draco was cut off by the Cruciatus Curse being placed on him by his master.

“Do not question my authority Draco.” Said Voldemort “The only reason you still live is because Bella saw fit to vouch for you. You should thank your aunt next time you see her.”

“I will my lord.” Panted Malfoy “I apologize.”

“Now.” Said Voldemort “You have yet to prove yourself by killing your assigned target. While you did manage to get my forces into Hogwarts where they eventually cornered and killed Dumbledore, I have a special mission for you.” Said Voldemort “You have failed to prove yourself as a loyal Death Eater as of yet.”

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“I will my lord.” Panted Malfoy “I apologize.”

“Now.” Said Voldemort “You have yet to prove yourself by killing your assigned target. While you did manage to get my forces into Hogwarts where they eventually cornered and killed Dumbledore, you have yet to kill in my name.”

“Dumbledore did something to me.” Lied the boy desperately “I was going to do it, but something in his eyes wouldn’t let me. It was a spell!”

“Do not lie to me Draco.” Said Voldemort “Your mother already paid the price for your failure and now your father shall as well.”

“You’re going to kill my father?” Asked Draco aghast

“No.” Said Voldemort “You are.”

This stunned the boy, much to Voldemort’s amusement. This punishment wasn’t really for Draco; it was to his father Lucius. The man had failed him one too many times and he was going to make an

example of. It seemed that the boy was learning his lesson because he did not protest the wishes of the Dark Lord.

"I understand." Said Draco emotionlessly

"Good." Said Voldemort "Now go find your father and give him a proper welcome."

The boy walked away and Voldemort noticed a change in his demeanor. The fear that had been seeping from him was no longer present. All the Dark Lord could sense from him was a deep resolve. He'd have to do a proper Legilimancy scan later; right now he had more pressing matters. He had been slowly making his way deeper into the prison and he now stood in front of a long hall of cell doors. These doors were heavily warded and housed some of the most dangerous criminals of the Wizarding world. Interestingly enough many of these weren't Death Eaters, but independent dark wizards and witches that had tried to make their own bid for power.

He waved his wand and silently cast a powerful unlocking spell that shattered the wards and caused all the doors to fly open. He walked down the corridor and looked into each cell. Most of these people were far too broken by long term exposure to the Dementors and would be no use to him. However as he passed a particular cell someone called his name, his given name.

"Tom." Said a raspy voice. "My how you've let yourself go."

Voldemort whirled in the direction of the voice and saw a man who looked to be in his eighties sitting on the metal cot in his cell. He had a massive tangle of silver hair that seemed to defy the laws of physics as it stuck in every direction.

"Well, well, well." Said Tom "If it isn't the notorious Henry Potter." This man had been the brother of Harold Potter who was the grandfather of Harry Potter. Unlike the rest of his family Henry didn't share his family's views on equality of Muggleborns and Half-Bloods. He had started his own bid for power, but had been stopped short early on after trying to pick up Grindlewald's slack. It had been in part thanks to Voldemort that he'd been caught. The Dark Lord had known that

this man was a very powerful wizard. Not as powerful as himself or Dumbledore, but given the right opportunity he could have opposed a great threat. Back in those days he couldn't outright kill the man as he was a well known member of a prominent pureblood family. His activities hadn't been public knowledge and only a few members of his family knew that many of the murders during the Grindlewald years had been committed by him and not wizards working for Grindlewald.

"I am glad to see I am remembered." Said Henry "The Aurors talk quite a bit when they think that everyone is catatonic. You've been quite busy lately. And I hear I've got a nephew who followed in my footsteps?"

"Potter didn't follow in your footsteps." Said Voldemort. "And the information about him being dead is also a lie, one of which I have yet to get to the bottom of."

"So what brings you here to the deepest darkest part of Azkaban?" Asked the haggard man.

"I'm sure you can figure it out." Said Voldemort "Surely you know that Dumbledore is dead?"

"So I've heard." Said Henry "That means you must be here to try and expand your forces, as well as reclaim some lost property."

"I see the years of solitude haven't dampened your mind." Said the Dark Lord "What say you then? Join me or I will be forced to end your miserable existence."

"Follow a filthy half-blood like you or die?" Asked Henry and Voldemort almost killed the man right then and there. He restrained himself though as this man could be very valuable. Somehow he'd managed to remain sane and relatively healthy, by the looks of things, despite constant exposure to the Dementors for the last fifty years. That was an accomplishment and people like Henry could hold some very valuable information.

“Well?” Asked Voldemort “As inspiring as your wit is I don’t have all day, make your choice.”

“I’m interested in seeing what exactly you have planned.” Said Henry “You were always an ambitious one back in school. That’s why you were in Slytherin. Yet you lacked the boldness needed to get certain things done.”

“Boldness is for fools and Gryffindors.” Said Voldemort

“Guilty on both accounts.” Said Henry “I underestimated you because you were younger than I and I felt I had more experience in things being raised as a wizard, while you were raised as a Muggle. In my foolishness I allowed you to maneuver me into a position where you had the advantage.”

“Just like a true Gryffindor would.” Said Voldemort mockingly “Now as much as I’ve enjoyed this little chat, I need your answer now.”

“I’ll join you for now.” Said Henry. He got off of his cot and walked over to the wall at the back of his cell. He pushed one of the bricks in and reached into the hole left by it. From it he withdrew a wand.

“You’ve got some explaining to do later.” Said Voldemort “For now you may want to join the rest of the Death Eaters and prepare for a duel. The Ministry and the Order will be here soon, if they haven’t yet arrived.”

“Whatever you say Tom.” Said Henry

“I go by a different name now Potter.” Said Voldemort trying to quell his rising ire.

“Flight from death.” Said Henry “Seeing your appearance I find it quite a fitting name.”

The Dark Lord ignored the man and continued looking into the cells. None of the other prisoners responded, so Voldemort left them alone. At the end of the passageway he saw a stairway leading downward. There were heavy wards around the stairway that seemed to rival

Hogwarts. He didn't have the energy to expend on that at the moment as the time for the ritual was near and he would need all his strength to perform the ceremony. He turned around and headed back toward the upper floors of the prison. He could hear the sounds of battle as he made his way up and he knew that the Aurors and Order had arrived. Now things were going to get interesting.

...

Ron got off the boat that he had road with Kingsley and a few other Aurors. The prison's massive doors had been blown off the hinges and as he walked through them he immediately had to doge killing curses. A few of the curses hit some of the Aurors, but most managed to dodge them. Ron fired back with stunners and mentally scoffed at the supposed light sides ideals about not stooping to the level of their enemies. As soon as he was out of sight of the rest of his companions he'd really start to cut loose. He couldn't use his full power as Ron's body wasn't used to channeling that much energy yet, that and the current wand didn't work as well anymore thanks to the changes in Ron's magical core caused by the fusion of their souls.

His aim had been good and the Death Eaters were stunned and immediately bound by the Aurors. Ron continued on through the prison with one goal in mind. Find his counterpart and have a nice long chat with him about imprisoning pieces of his soul to a hellish existence simply to preserve a piece of his essence. As Ron headed down one corridor he recognized the voice of Draco Malfoy coming from a cell within it.

"This is all your fault." Said Draco "He killed mother because you failed, he sent me on a mission he knew I'd fail because you made him angry, now I'm stuck serving half-blood filth because you chose to side with him."

"And what will you do about it Draco?" Asked the voice of Lucius Malfoy

"I might not have been able to kill Dumbledore." Said Draco "But I will not die for the likes of you. Avada Kadavra!" Ron saw a flash of green light followed shortly by a thump and he knew that Lucius was dead.

His counterpart must have felt that the man had outlived his usefulness. It was odd. Part of him regretted the loss of a good follower, but thanks to the memories of Ron he knew that Lucius had forsaken him after his demise. That alone deserved death in his view and he knew that if it had taken his counterpart this long to have the man killed then he had really outlived his usefulness.

Draco left the cell and when he turned around he came face to face with Ron. The blonde Slytherin fired a cutting hex at the possessed Gryffindor who promptly dodged before sending a disarming hex back. It wouldn't do to kill good followers, who could be useful once he merged with his counterpart.

"I don't want to kill you Malfoy." Said Riddle "But if you leave me no choice I will be forced to."

"What are you playing at Weasel?" Asked Malfoy "You not wanting to kill me is like Potter not wanting to kill the Dark Lord."

"You shouldn't concern yourself with that." Said Riddle "If you value your life you should leave now."

In response Malfoy shot a killing curse at Ron who dodged it and sent a full body bind at the Slytherin. The curse caught him and he promptly fell to the ground efficiently subdued. Ron walked over to him and knelt beside the fallen blonde.

"You know you may just have some uses." He said thoughtfully "I think I'll bring you along. This meeting will be very interesting and I wonder how the Dark Lord will react when he sees me. I may need a human shield anyway." He levitated the body so that it floated behind him and continued walking through the prison. He killed a few Death Eaters that were stupid enough to cross his path and continued onward. He could feel the presence of his counterpart and went in that direction. He passed an old man who gave him an odd look, nodded to himself before continuing on. He hadn't shot any spells at Ron so the possessed wizard left him alone. He had more important things to do and wasting his energy on harmless old men wasn't one of them.

As he turned a corner he found himself face to face with his counterpart, Lord Voldemort. The Dark Lord looked at him oddly before addressing him.

"You are Potter's little sidekick, Weasley isn't it?" Asked Voldemort

"Yes and no." Said Riddle "I think you already know who I am so why don't you do us both a favor and drop the act of ignorance."

Voldemort looked into the purple eyes of the young man in front of him and Ron could feel the probe of Legilimancy. Instead of forcing it out he let it in and when it was into his mind he forced all the memories of solitude and desolation upon the intruding presence. Voldemort immediately backed out of his mind and stared at him wide-eyed.

"It's not possible." He said in shock

"I assure you it is." Said Riddle "You made the Horcruxes, but you had no idea what would actually happen to the pieces of soul you left behind. Did you think we'd just cease to exist, that we wouldn't be aware of our situation, that we wouldn't share your desire to remain alive?"

"It was a decision I made to ensure my victory." Said Voldemort regaining his composure "I do not regret it and neither should you."

"I don't regret it." Said Riddle "I understand why you did it, after all we are in essence the same person. I see how it came in handy and has kept both of us alive this far. I simply think that is time to undo what's been done."

"I must disagree." Said Voldemort "I don't need you any longer. You have left your container and that is one less part of me that anchors my spirit to this world."

"I was afraid you'd say something like that." Said Ron before quickly withdrawing his wand, pointing it at Voldemort and saying "Legilimens!" The Dark Lord thrust up a quick shield, but he was facing a Legilimens that was equal in power to himself. The

abruptness of the attack was enough of an advantage to allow Riddle to see into his counterparts mind. At the forefront of Voldemort's mind he saw all the recent events and realized who the old man was that he'd passed. Next he saw all about the ritual and it was enough to make him withdraw from the mind.

"Interesting." Said Riddle "I was going to try and merge with you now, but seeing that makes me think I should wait."

Voldemort was panting from the invasion of his mind. He was stunned at the power that this boy held. He knew that a portion of his soul resided within him and was controlling him, but he couldn't understand why it was that powerful. Then it hit him. The first Horcrux he'd made took half his soul. The next took half of the remaining soul and so on and so forth. This meant that by the time he'd made Nagini into a Horcrux he was only left with a fraction of 1/64 of his soul. This meant that the soul fraction inside of Ron was over half his soul making the boy more powerful than he was right now.

"The look on your face tells me you've caught on." Said Riddle "Like I said, I won't merge with you right now; I think I'll even help you. You need Ginny for the ritual and I enjoy seeing her suffer." He waved his wand and Draco's still bound body floated in front of him. The blonde boy's eyes were wide with horror at what he'd heard and Voldemort looked at him with a bit of apprehension.

"You can always obliviate him later." Said Riddle "He did complete his mission you gave him. Shame though I remember Lucius being very useful."

"Why did you bring the boy?" Asked Voldemort

"I thought you might start firing curses the second you saw me and figured a human shield would be useful to block the killing curse." Said Riddle "Now though he has other uses." He pulled up Draco's left sleeve to reveal the Dark Mark. He placed his finger on it and it began to turn black and the sound of sizzling flesh filled the room. Voldemort was still too shocked to try and stop his counterpart so the possessed wizard continued on unimpeded.

...

As Ginny tried to clear her mind she started to hear voices. They weren't coming from anywhere outside the house, or even inside, but from her own head.

You're going to be the instrument of your beloved Harry's destruction. Doesn't that make you happy?

Maybe I'll torture the little girl next...

Feel the blood run down your hands, isn't it intoxicating? Now nothing can kill my basilisk and it's all thanks to you.

We can't see each other anymore...

Crucio

She suddenly snapped out of her trance and noticed the growing cold of the room. She looked out of a window and saw several cloaked figures floating around the house. Dementors! She didn't know what they could possibly want with her. There were so many of them and she knew that they were sided with Voldemort. This couldn't be a random attack because they were all surrounding the house looking for a way in.

She withdrew her wand and focused on reinforcing the feeble security wards around the flat. They were just holding out keeping the foul creatures at bay and she knew that if there were any Death Eaters with them the wards could be taken down easily. She had to find a way out and she needed to find it now.

She was almost certain that the Dementors had weren't alone. Their behavior suggested that they were sent to track her not devour her soul. The chill in the air was growing and the voices in her head were amplifying causing her to relive her most unpleasant memories. She fought the effects as best she could while still looking for a means to escape. The house was completely surrounded, so that left running out of the question. Using her cloak was useless as the Dementors would still be able to sense her. She wished she was an Animagus

like Sirius because then she may have been able to slip away. She considered using the Firebolt, but it was incredibly risky since she had no idea where the Death Eaters were that were outside or how many there were.

The Dementors started to press against the wards and she could sense them beginning to crumble. She knew that she didn't have a choice now. She'd have to fight the effects as best she could and risk flying the broom. She ran into her bedroom and grabbed it from under the cot she used as a bed. She mounted it and shot a blasting hex at the window. The Dementors started to gather around the newly opened entrance and as she flew out she felt one of their decomposed hands grab her leg. The memories stopped being voices and she found herself reliving every horrid experience in startling clarity. Everything from childhood traumas, the chamber, Harry dumping her and Ron's betrayal all played throughout her head. Suddenly she was back flying the broom again and she swerved to avoid crashing into a tree. Her momentum had dislodged the Dementor's hand and now she was almost home free.

Red light shot out of nowhere and hit the broom. It bucked she barely managed to stay on. More stunners came her direction and it took all her flying skills to avoid them. She pushed the Firebolt to its limits and flew as fast as she could. She didn't know where she would go now; her money was back at the flat as well as the few clothes she'd managed to get from home. She only had her wand and what was on her back. Her contemplations were interrupted by a searing pain in her left arm. She looked at it and saw the corner of the Dark Mark peaking out of her sleeve. It was jet black and had smoke coming from it. Something inside her had the overwhelming urge to appearate. It didn't matter that she had little idea of how to appearate an internal force seemed to tell her magic what to do. She felt as though she was being squeezed through a tube and her world suddenly went black.

When the world came into view again she found herself standing in a corridor, however she wasn't alone. There standing not five feet away from her was Ron and he was standing beside a floating Draco Malfoy who appeared to be in a full body bind.

“I’m glad you could make it Ginevra.” Said Ron cheerfully “I know someone whose been looking for you for quite some time now.”

“What?” Asked Ginny confused as to how she got where she was. She could hear a commotion in the distance and she saw many doors with bars set in small windows on them. “Where am I?”

“Azkaban.” Said Ron “And I think you should turn around.”

Ginny slowly turned her head and what she saw made her back against the nearby wall. There standing in all his glory was Lord Voldemort. He looked to be confused and his crimson eyes held something, that if she didn’t know better, would say was fear. Voldemort seemed to shake himself and his countenance changed from confused to downright angry.

“You dare to make a mockery of me?” He hissed dangerously “You may have managed to revive yourself, but I am the original and there can be only one Dark Lord, Avada Kadavra!” The killing curse sped towards Ron and the younger wizard jumped aside. The curse flew centimeters over Draco’s floating body and the blonde’s eyes, if possible, grew even wider than before. Ron simply looked at Voldemort with a smirk on his face.

“We’ll meet again.” He said before disappearing straight through the wards.

The Dark Lord shook himself and turned his wand on Draco. “You’ve seen entirely too much boy.” He said before obliterating the young Malfoy. He then turned to Ginny “As unsettling as this is he did manage to give me what I was looking for.” Faster than Ginny thought possible the Dark Lord grabbed her arm which immediately started to burn. He disappeared them both away from Azkaban and into a dark room. Before Ginny could react he had stunned her and she knew no more.

...

Ron appeared back at the gates of the fortress. The Order and ministry were losing ground fast and he knew this was a good thing.

His counterpart wanted to use the fortress as a stronghold and he couldn't agree more with his choice. Hogwarts would be difficult to take even with the diminished wards. Therefore this place would serve as an excellent base of operations until the school could be taken. He saw the other Weasleys fighting the Death Eaters alongside Lupin and Tonks. He contemplated killing them all right then and there, but he thought better of it as they still had their uses. McGonagall came rushing out of the prison shouting orders to retreat. The wards were sufficiently damaged to allow apparition out of the island and the forces of the light started their retreat. Ron smiled to himself before apparating back to Number 12 Grimmauld Place. This battle while a failure for the Ministry and the Order had been a great success for him. Tomorrow would be Christmas day and it was already looking to be a happy Christmas for the Dark Lord.

...

It was six days later when Ginny regained consciousness. She found herself chained to a wall in a square room and she was not alone. Voldemort stood in front of her holding his wand apparently just enervating her. In his other hand he held a knife that had a weird glow to it.

"Unfortunately for you this process requires you to be awake." Said the Dark Lord. He waved his wand and Ginny felt her body stiffen. She couldn't move even if she wanted to and she suddenly noticed that she was stark naked. She didn't feel as though she'd been violated in any way, thankfully. But the look of the knife in Voldemort's hand didn't look promising. He touched the tip of the knife to her right shoulder and made a long shallow cut along her collar bone. Searing pain washed over her whole body as the knife dug into her flesh ripping away the skin and leaving a bloody trail as it went. He didn't remove the knife from her skin even as he continued tracing some kind of runes along her chest and stomach, down one leg then up the other. Somehow, Ginny wasn't sure as she had started to lose focus, he managed to get the knife around to her back and runes were carved there as well. Blood gushed from the wounds, but it didn't spill onto the floor. Instead it was collected in some sort of container that the Dark Lord conjured beneath her. The process took several hours and as much as Ginny wanted to scream the spell which suspended

her in stasis would not allow it. Tears welled in her eyes, but they too would not fall.

After an eternity it was over, but the pain was still there. Voldemort stood back and admired his handiwork. "Good the Runes are in place." He said "You'll stay like that until tomorrow night when I take you to Stonehenge to finish the process. Until then have a good night." He left the room leaving the red head hanging stiffly on the wall wondering what horrible fate awaited her come the next day.

...

Lord Voldemort and his contingent of Death Eaters approached what to Muggles would be a ruin of mismatched stones. To a wizard however this place was no ruin. The monument of Stonehenge was whole and its archways and stone daises shown clearly in the light of the full moon. It was two hours before the dawn of a new year and the time had come for the Dark Lord to ensure his victory. His counterpart had foolishly allowed him to escape in order to perform the ritual and it was a testament to how arrogant he'd been when he made the Horcruxes that made up the part of his soul that resided inside of Ron's body. He went up to the center stone and began to trace runes in it using the blood he had procured from Ginny the day before. Once he was done he waved his wand and the imprisoned Fawkes appeared before him. With another wave of his wand the urn containing Dumbledore's remains also appeared on the alter. He removed the lid from the Ashes and spread them over the alter. He then took the imprisoned phoenix and prodded the prison with his wand. A pointed hollow tube came out of the end of his wand and entered the stasis prison. It went into the phoenix' skin and began to withdraw the blood. The blood went into another container and Voldemort kept taking it until the phoenix' body began to shrivel up from the lack of fluid. The bird disappeared in a burst of flame leaving ashes scattered throughout the hollow pyramid. Voldemort released the binding on the prison and the ashes intermingled with those of Dumbledore.

Next he took some of the phoenix blood and traced runes onto the alter with it. Blue light started to emanate from the runes and the Dark Lord withdrew a vial of potion. Before he did anything with it he

waved his wand and Ginny's still bound body appeared atop the glowing runes. Once she came in contact with the runes on the alter the ones traced into her body started to glow as well. Despite the stasis spell that was still in place a scream was ripped from her lips and the sound was like music to Voldemort's ears. The Death Eaters spread around the monument as they had been instructed to do. Each holding their wands out and pointing toward the center of the monument. Voldemort waved his wand and a rune appeared underneath the feet of each Death Eater. None of his inner circle was here as he wasn't quite sure what the effects on his followers would be. These wizards and witches were all new recruits, most fresh out of Hogwarts.

He uncorked the potion and added the remainder of the phoenix blood to it. The once white liquid immediately turned as black as night and vapor started to rise from it. Voldemort downed the vial in one gulp and suppressed a wince as runes appeared on his body. He withdrew a second vial and poured it over the still screaming girl. The potion entered her bloodstream through the still open wounds and her screams increased. Next Voldemort placed both hands over the girl's body and began to recite the words that would forever increase his power.

"As one year leaves and a new one rises, let the magic which runs through my veins flow into this vessel." Purple light came from his hands and he could feel his magic leaving his body. "Let this vessel assimilate the magic strengthening it with her own." The runes on the alter and Ginny's body began to glow even brighter and her screams increased even more. "Let the magic of the fallen enter the vessel fusing the magic as one." The Ashes began to rise from the alter and started to form a glowing fog. The fog encompassed the whole monument giving it a sickly red glow. The Runes around the feet of each Death Eater began to glow and they were rooted to the spot.

"Let the magic of the fallen take the magic in the vessel and claim it for its own!" Continued the Dark Lord his voice rising over the roaring whirl of energy that began to swirl around the entire monument. Magic began to pour out of the runes on Ginny's body forming a ball of pale purple energy above the monument. "Let the sacrifice of the vessel return the magic to its rightful owner!" He withdrew a long

silver dagger and began to lower it to Ginny's throat. He started to laugh maniacally as he began to cut her throat making more blood spew onto the alter.

Suddenly a sound racked the air as if the planet itself was crying out. Voldemort couldn't see the alter anymore, instead he saw bright green light and felt pain all over his entire body. He heard a scream of pain that melded with the roaring magic and seemed to intensify the green light. His vision began to clear and he was back at the alter. He saw the green light coming from directly above the alter and in a burst of flame a jet black phoenix appeared in the center of the light. It let out a trill that didn't sound like any phoenix the Dark Lord had ever seen. The sound was hollow and empty, yet still held an underlying power. The ball of magic was still in the air as well and as the phoenix trilled the green light shot out to cover the entire monument. The Death Eaters screamed as the magic burned them alive and Voldemort felt his own flesh being ravaged by the spell. He couldn't put up a shield because he had poured a good part of his magic into Ginny and it hadn't returned to him yet. He needed power and he needed it now. He could feel the lives of the Death Eaters ending around him and using what little magic remained in him he pulled all the souls he could into his magical core. The spirits protested at first, but then all of a sudden they stopped and green energy poured into him. The phoenix had now landed on the alter atop the dying girl and was spilling tears into the gaping wound on her neck. Voldemort wasn't going to allow the bird to get away with what it had done. He'd now lost about thirty followers and his ritual had been ruined. The power that was supposed to have come to him had now disappeared without a trace. He raised his wand and pointed it at the phoenix. The bird looked at him with its empty green eyes and something in the eyes flashed. The bird waved its right wing and a ball of fire shot at the Dark Lord. He dodged it nimbly, but that was all the opportunity the bird needed to flame away with the girl in toe.

Voldemort looked around and saw that Stonehenge was completely leveled. Whatever spell that had been held a great deal of destructive power. He checked his magic and saw that despite the failure of the ritual his power had still increased. He attributed this to his intake of his followers' magic. Even though they couldn't serve him they were still being put to good use. He knew that a Ministry crew would arrive

soon and decided to wait for them. He had a great deal of new power now and it would be interesting to see exactly what he could do with it.

...

"I thought I told you not to interfere." Said Tribal as Merlin walked up to the observatory of the Crystal Citadel. "You called my bluff Merlin and that will cost you greatly."

"It had to be done." Said Merlin "He could not be allowed to gain such power."

"If that was your reasoning I'm afraid your plan backfired." Said Tribal "He ended up gaining a lot more power than he would have if you had let the ritual go according to plan."

"What?" Asked the shocked wizard.

"You see Potter was holding an Ultima Materia at the time." Said Tribal "When his scar burst open his blood activated the stored magic in the materia. It forced the spell to be cast and as you took away his phoenix form to make your little puppet it too cast the spell. When it appeared at Stonehenge it ended up killing all the Death Eaters. Since I control what happens to souls after death I put them to good use."

"You didn't!" Said a flabbergasted Merlin "There had to be thirty souls there! You let him absorb thirty people's magical essence! Zidane that was an incredibly foolish thing to do. Do you not realize that with that much power he could possibly come HERE?"

"You sound afraid." Said Zidane "As long as I am here you have nothing to fear. His power pales in comparison to mine."

"Arrogance is unbecoming of you." Said Merlin "You may be Death Incarnate, but you still have your limitations, or didn't you learn that from your predecessor?"

“I am much more than Necron could have hoped to be.” Said Zidane
“And now for the next step in my plan. Since you introduced a wild card I think I’ll do the same.”

“Who could you possibly send to Temprus that would rival the boy’s power?” Asked Merlin

“My brother.” Said Zidane immediately causing Merlin to lose the remaining color in his face.

A/N: There we are another chapter done. Please let me know what you think, I appreciate any kind of feedback even the senseless flames.

Old Men's Secrets

Zidane smirked at Merlin's reaction. "I see his reputation precedes him. Kuja will make things very interesting."

"You are completely insane." Said Merlin

"You knew that when you took the oath after you died." Said Zidane "I showed you what Fate had in store for your world and you didn't like it. We came to an agreement and I helped you manipulate Destiny so that the prophecy was made. Now that you've gotten what you want you think that you can backstab me. I'm sorry to say Merlin, but it doesn't work that way. Your actions have doomed your world to a much worse fate than it would have been."

"You had planned to use the boy instead of the girl in the first place." Shot back Merlin "How could you possibly say that Earth is worse now because of that?"

"You just wait and see wizard." Said Zidane "Just wait and see."

Lord Tribal walked out of his observatory to commence his plans to reawaken his brother unto the unsuspecting world of Temprus. Merlin shook his head gravely. He had managed to give his former world a chance by introducing the Aeon. He'd had to take a part of the boy's soul as well as one of his Animagus forms in order to create it, but with it accompanying the girl it just might give them a fighting chance, at least until the merger happened anyway. His actions had also sped that process. Time now flowed at a ratio of about 3 ¼ days on Temprus for every day on Earth. Whereas before it flowed at about 7 to 1.

Now it seemed his actions had a much greater consequence. He knew Zidane had the power to do with the souls as he saw fit. That was part of the deal that made him accept his fate. He could use the souls of the dead in any way he wanted, provided they were judged harshly based on life. Other souls like himself had a choice. They could either go on to the normal afterlife, or they could assist him in his endeavors. Merlin remembered his time of death very well. Zidane had told him that his world was doomed to eternal darkness and

suffering in 1900 years, but if he was to assist him, he could help him alter such a horrid fate. Merlin being who he was had immediately agreed.

Zidane's plan was one full of ambition and it interested Merlin greatly. The unification of these specific worlds was only the first step. What came next was what truly horrified Merlin and this was why he couldn't let it succeed. He made his way down to one of the many rooms of the Crystal Citadel. Zidane was allowing him to do as he pleased because something inside him, most likely who he used to be, also didn't want the plan to succeed, this was why he had to at least try.

He saw on one of the monitors a great deal of stray magic. He knew that it was the combination of Ginny's magic along with a good deal of Voldemort's. The interesting thing was that this magic wasn't trying to return to its host. It was going somewhere entirely unexpected, yet at the same time most beneficial. It seemed that manipulating Destiny had many benefits. "And he shall mark him as his equal." Said Merlin to himself while suppressing a chuckle. Voldemort may have become a lot more powerful, but his nemesis might just surpass him.

...

If there was one thing that Harry Potter was starting to get used to, that thing was pain. Indeed he and pain had become quite well acquainted throughout his life. Whether it be physical, emotional, magical or any other type of hurt, he had felt it many times. This time it was once again the former. His body felt as though it had been ripped apart and then forcibly smashed back together. The last thing he remembered was running from the Krorg and then his scar bursting into pain. After that he blanked out. He realized that he was laying on something hard and that the air around him felt damp and he could smell water. He attempted to open his eyes and found that he could not. Sighing mentally he decided that he should check out his mind. If he'd heard Voldemort this meant that the link must be active once again.

He plunged into his subconscious barely able to ignore the dull ache that went down to his bones. When he got into his mind he

immediately noticed something was different. The passageway that labeled 'Forms' was now open. As curious as he was to see this, there was something more important to look at. He made his way to the bonds chamber to check on his connection to Voldemort. He saw that the gate had been blasted off its hinges and hung in two separate pieces on either side. He saw a long dark opening beyond and was about to go down it when a voice stopped him.

"I wouldn't do that." Said Seth "If he let you in he could easily trap you and then you'd be a living vegetable."

Harry cringed at the implications and backed away from the opening. He turned to face the guardian who was looking at him oddly. "What?" He asked

"Do you have any idea what just happened to you?" He asked

"Something weird." Said Harry "I know it must have to do with that ritual that guy was talking about before I woke up on the Thunder Planes. Other than that I don't know."

"I'm not all that sure myself." Said Seth "But I can tell you that half of your magic was taken away as well as half of all your stocked spells."

By the tone of the guardian's voice Harry could tell that there was more. "And...?"

"It is better to show you." Said Seth "Look in the forms room."

Harry did as he was told and made his way to the forms room. Once inside he saw a room with several statues in it. There was a panther, a wolf, a snake and one statue that appeared to be nothing more than a pile of rubble.

"Wonder what this means." Said Harry aloud.

"It means." Said an unfamiliar voice, although he thought he recognized it from somewhere. "That you had four forms and now you have three, quite impressive although for such a useless wizard like you I don't see you mastering one of these, let alone all of them."

Harry whirled to face the sound of the voice and saw a man with a bald head and dark silver beard. He did have some hair around his ears and some that hung at shoulder length off the back of his head. His eyes were a reddish-golden color and he wore black robes with silver trim running down both sides of the center fastenings as well as on the cuff of the sleeves. Harry recognized the man as the dirty old man from the traveler's lodge, and therefore also being the man who talked to him during his battle with the fake Ultima Weapon.

"Who are you and how did you get in here?" Asked Harry

"Second question first." Said the intruder "Your Occlumency defenses were laughable and in your current state a toddler could break into your mind."

"Well its not like I've had any proper training in it." Said Harry defensively "And what about my first question?"

"I am a wizard, like you." Said the man "Although when I left our world it was a bit different, and yet similar."

"I gathered that much." Said Harry irritably "It still doesn't answer my question. Who are you?"

"I have gone by many names." Said the old wizard. "However you may recognize Dark Lord Grindlewald."

Harry was sure he'd heard wrong. "What?" He asked

"You heard correctly." Said Grindlewald "I suppose an explanation is in order. It was a cloudy day in Germany in the fall of 1945. I and my once friend Albus Dumbledore were in a duel. Albus didn't have it in him to cast the killing curse and I was too powerful for any other kind of spell. Albus being the studious Slytherin he was looked in some ancient texts for a spell that would get the job done. I'm not sure what he expected, but when he cast his spell he told me to "Enjoy the next great adventure." Then an odd white light shot out of his wand. The breath of the spell was too wide, so I couldn't dodge it. I attempted a

shield, but it didn't hold. Next thing I know the world starts to spin and I find myself in a place seeping with magic and having two suns."

Harry was trying to process several pieces of information. This man in front of him was claiming to be the worst Dark Lord since before Voldemort. He also claimed to have once been Dumbledore's friend, and he claimed that Dumbledore had been a Slytherin. That last piece of information didn't surprise Harry all that much. Albus Dumbledore was a master manipulator and he worked very subtly and craftily with what he did. The eccentric front he showed the world was also a testament to his cunning. Harry knew exactly how powerful Dumbledore had been. When he'd seen him duel Voldemort the spells and techniques used by both men had been beyond anything he could ever hope to do.

"Albus always was a show off." Said Grindlewald reading his thoughts. "And that Dark Lord of yours isn't much better. Honestly shooting a mark into the sky like a calling card."

"How?" Was all Harry managed to formulate in response to the information he'd just received

"You want to know how I'm still alive with the time difference between the words." Said the older wizard. "Albus wasn't the only friend Nicolas had."

"You don't mean..." Said Harry

"Yes." Said Grindlewald "I have taken the Elixir of Life. Funny it worked a lot differently once I got here. I never had to take another dose, I just stopped aging."

"So you're the other offworlder that disappeared a thousand years ago." Said Harry regaining his composure.

"Indeed." Said Grindlewald "I traveled this world searching for a way to return home, only to find that there was none."

"There has to be a way." Said Harry adamantly "You just didn't find it."

"I have searched the four corners of this world, in every place you could imagine, and some you couldn't." Said Grindlewald "There is no way."

"I refuse to believe that." Said Harry

"Believe what you will." Said Grindlewald "A thousand years is a long time lad, if there was a way I'd have found it."

"So why are you in my mind?" Asked Harry changing the subject "Surely you have more important things to do."

"As a matter of fact I don't." Said Grindlewald "I am tired of living in this world. I have no purpose anymore, you however do. I am in need of an apprentice."

"What makes you think I want to learn from you?" Asked Harry. In truth he was curious as to what this man had to teach. If he'd been alive as long as he claimed he was probably very powerful and had a vast depth to his knowledge. However, he was also one of the most feared Dark Wizards in the last century. Whatever he had to teach was most likely things Harry had no desire to know.

"You hate the supposed Dark Arts then?" Asked Grindlewald rhetorically "That is expected, you were Albus' protégé after all. Let me ask you something lad. What would happen if you hit someone's spine with a cushioning charm?"

Harry thought about that. The charm was used to soften hard surfaces, usually floors. If it was cast on a wall it also made it soft, but if you cast it on someone's spine it would make the vertebrae soft. The weight of the cartilage would push down and... "Ugh!" Said Harry disgusted.

"Would you call that spell dark?" Asked Grindlewald "Even though it could be used to paralyze if used in the right contexts?"

"Well it's the intention of the spell that makes it evil." Said Harry automatically

"If that is the case then the Unforgivable Curses are not evil are they?" Asked Grindlewald

"Those spells don't have any positive uses." Said Harry "And neither does most of the Dark Arts."

"Wrong." Said Grindlewald "The Cruciatus is simply a modified tickling charm which was originally used to restore damaged nerve endings, the Imperious can be applied to help people overcome phobias as well as control a rampaging animal. The Avada Kadavra is a painless way to kill someone, which is why it is the most foolish thing to do to an enemy."

"But hate makes those spells work." Protested Harry

"Wrong once again." Said Grindlewald "Emotions effect the potency of spells yes, but they do not control the actual magic. That comes from the intent. Magic is a tool that can be used however the user sees fit, if they know how. That is what you are going to learn."

"I haven't agreed to anything." Said Harry

"I'm afraid you don't have much of a choice." Said Grindlewald coolly
"You owe me a life debt and you shall repay it by becoming my apprentice."

"I owe you no such thing!" Said Harry heatedly

"How do you think you made it out of that Ultima spell?" Asked Grindlewald. "Your friends left you there, that monster was meters away from you and you were at the center of a massive magical explosion. If it hadn't been for me you'd be a pile of dust right now."

"It is true." Said Seth startling Harry who had forgotten all about the guardian. "He surrounded you with some kind of shield and teleported you away from Giran's manner."

"Interesting." Said Grindlewald "I don't think I've seen this guardian before."

"I'm a new addition." Said Seth

"I suppose I don't have a choice if you use the life debt against me." Said Harry forlornly, although he was excited on some level to finally be able to learn something that might help him defeat Voldemort.

"Very good." Said Grindlewald "When you wake up we'll begin."

"How long have I been out?" Asked Harry

"About two months so far." Said Grindlewald "It will probably be another before you awaken. Assimilating such a large amount of magic takes time."

"What do you mean?" Asked Harry

"First a great deal of your magic was taken away." Explained the wizard. "Your body started to adjust to this, but then a massive amount of magic which surpassed your old limits was infused into you. Now your body has to make places for that magic. The process is quite painful and your mind went into suspended animation to avoid going insane from the intensity of the pain."

"So how am I aware now?" Asked Harry slightly confused

"The process is ending so your mind was released." Said Grindlewald "Now we just have to wait for you to physically heal."

"Can't you just give me an Elixir?" Asked Harry

"Even if I had one, which I don't, giving you a magical potion would interfere with the process." Said Grindlewald "This is why Cure spells are also out of the question."

"I suppose I'll wait then." Said Harry "What happened to the others anyway?"

"No idea." Said Grindlewald "You were my only concern. For all I know the Strife Corp. Soldiers or the Black Wings got them."

“Strife Corp?” Asked Harry

“The private army of Strife Corporation.” Said Seth “You do remember Sheyna explaining to you all about the war between them and the Black Wings don’t you?”

“Oh yeah.” Said Harry “I still don’t see what a communications company needs an army for.”

“You’d be surprised.” Said Seth and Grindlewald at the same time.

“I must be going now.” Said Grindlewald “I need to renew the stasis spell on your body so you don’t die of malnutrition.”

Harry watched as the man disappeared from his mindscape. Seth too returned to the junctions section of his mind. Harry looked at the rubble that remained of the stature. He didn’t know what this form had been, but he felt a deep sense of loss now that it was gone. The other wizard had said he’d need to sacrifice something to save Ginny. If that was the case he hoped whatever it was had gotten the job done.

...

Harry didn’t return to the waking world for another whole month. He wasn’t idle in this time however. Grindlewald told him that since he couldn’t wake up he should work on strengthening his Occlumency shields. Simply having them in place wasn’t enough. He needed to make sure they stayed reinforced, and put in some more security measures. He did this and later he found he was glad he did. It seemed that the mako manifested its mental side effects in an interesting way.

He had been organizing his memories once again. This time he focused on getting all the memories of his time in this world straight. He was so lost in what he was doing that he didn’t notice something creeping up behind him until he felt an intense heat. He dodged to the side just in time to avoid a Firaga spell cast at him by a Bomb. Harry looked at the purple ball of fire curiously. He wondered how it had gotten into his mind and once more how it had cast a spell at him.

The creature began to grow and Harry knew what was coming. He didn't know what to do, but instinct took over and a transparent bubble appeared around the fiend. When it exploded the bubble contained the blast preventing any damage to his mind.

"What the hell was that?" He asked the air.

"A Bomb.' Said Seth

"I know that." Said Harry "I mean what the hell was it doing in my head?"

"Probably the Mako." Said the guardian "Mind altering effects indeed."

"Great." Said Harry bitterly "Now I'm going to have to do regular sweeps in here to make sure fiends don't destroy my mind."

"I'll help where I can." Said Seth "If it gets too much for me to handle I'll let you know."

That had been a week after he'd become aware again. Since then he'd had to deal with ten more fiend appearances. Setting up extra defenses did help. He now had a type of mental proximity mine on each of his memories' sections. If anything but him or Seth went near them it would detonate on contact. This helped with the first few waves, and even now worked for the weaker fiends that appeared. However there were some nasty ones spawned by the mako that the mines didn't help with at all. He reinforced the pathways in his mind to help with the tougher fiends. This way they were held at bay until himself or Seth could deal with them.

The month had been an odd one in Harry's opinion. He couldn't remember there ever being a time when he didn't see the sunlight in more than a week. He also didn't need to breathe while in his mental realm, making waking up all the more refreshing. He cracked his eyes slowly and immediately shut them. While there wasn't a bright light, there was still a decent glow which hurt his eyes which had become used to darkness. He tried again this time squinting to lessen the pain. He blinked a few times and the world slowly came into focus. He was

in a cave lying on some sort of fiend skin. It wasn't very soft, but it did keep him from lying on bare stone.

"Welcome back to the land of the living." Said Grindlewald "I'll allow you to rest today; I'm sure you're thirsty and could use a bite to eat." He waved his hand and a plate of roast beef with a side of potatoes and carrots appeared. Another wave and a large goblet of Pumpkin juice appeared as well. Harry ate the food gratefully and was surprised it actually tasted like something other than cardboard. He had been told conjured food tasted like chalk, although it would sustain a person for a while.

"Magic works how you will it to work." Said Grindlewald picking up on Harry's thoughts. The younger wizard was a bit annoyed by this, especially since he'd spent the entirety of the last month strengthening his mental defenses. Once again Grindlewald picked up his thoughts. "Defenses are pointless if you broadcast your thoughts. You think so loud anyone with rudimentary level Legilimancy could hear you."

"How do I not do that then?" Asked Harry

"It comes with experience." Said Grindlewald "Once you start practicing Legilimancy it will develop on its own."

"You'll be teaching me how to do that then?" Asked Harry

"Among other things." Said Grindlewald "Your body is basically the same as it was before you went into that coma thanks to the stasis spell I cast on you. Be ready bright and early tomorrow morning."

Harry nodded before thinking of a something very important. He tried to summon his sword to him, but it wouldn't come. Since he'd been in this world, no matter where his sword had been it always appeared in his hand when he wanted it. He tried again but it wouldn't come. "Where's my sword?" He asked

"No idea." Said Grindlewald "I only grabbed you and this." He pulled out a black orb from his robes and showed it to Harry.

"What is that?" He asked

"The Ultima Materia." Said Grindlewald "Although I don't think that's what it will cast now."

"What do you mean?" Asked Harry

"It absorbed a great deal of magic through your blood." Said Grindlewald "You see how its black instead of green? That is very significant. If I had to hazard a guess I'd say that it now casts Apocalypse and Doomsday."

"I've never heard of those spells." Said Harry "Are those what's suppose to be more powerful than Ultima?"

"Precisely." Said Grindlewald "Perhaps you aren't the hopeless case I thought you were."

Harry was unsure weather to be appreciative or offended. He settled for indifference as he figured this sort of criticism would become normal once the training started.

...

The next day at exactly 4:00 a.m. Harry was awakened by being doused with ice cold water. He awoke with a start his clothes dripping wet and his teeth chattering. He looked around for the source of his discomfort and saw Grindlewald leaning against the cave wall near the entrance with his hand raised and palm facing Harry. The younger wizard noticed for the first time a dragon's head burned into Grindlewald's left palm much like the phoenix feather was burned into Harry's right one. He figured that the Ex-Dark Lord's wand must have had a dragon heart string core.

"I said be up bright and early." Admonished Grindlewald. "From this point on you will not use any Junctions or Materia, understood?"

"Not like I have any materia anyway." Said Harry. He'd found out in addition to missing his sword, he also didn't have his bangle or the

materia that had been in it. He really hoped he could get that back eventually. "Why no junctions though?"

"You are here to learn how to use your magic not the magic you drew from somewhere else." Grindlewald waved his hand and Harry felt a burning on his chest. Immediately he felt a drop in his overall power.

"What did you do to me!" He demanded

"I sealed your junctions." Said Grindlewald "No GF, no super infused Ultima and Holy strength."

Harry tried to talk to Seth, but he got no answer. He plunged into his mind and saw that the Junctions Chamber now had a gate like the Forms one had had. "Seth!" He called out and he saw the guardian come out of the Bonds Chamber.

"What did you do?" Asked the guardian "All of your junctions went into some kind of stasis, they stopped using your core magic to multiply and the channels I made are blocked. I can't even tell what's going on outside anymore."

"Grindlewald did something to me." Answered Harry "Part of my training I think. I'd better get back; I just wanted to see what had happened in here. Take care of any Mako Fiends for me."

"Not like I have much else to do now." Said Seth

Harry returned to the waking world to see Grindlewald glaring at him. "Satisfied now?" Asked the older wizard "Come out here, we'll be starting your first task."

They left the cave and Harry looked at his surroundings for the first time. The cave was near a river, which held some greenery around it as well as a few fruit trees and a vegetable he recognized here and there. The opposite way of the river was a vast desert. The cave was located on the side of a mountain, which was part of a larger range.

"If it weren't for that river this whole area would be nothing but desert. There's another river south of here that runs along the Coral

Mountains. On either end of the desert as well as north of the mountains you'll find the ocean." Informed Grindlewald

"So where exactly are we?" Asked Harry

"One of the most remote places on the planet." Said Grindlewald "The North Coral Desert on Gaea."

"How'd we get here?" Asked Harry. He knew that airship travel was restricted and that most models couldn't land in deserts. He also knew that Gaea was separated from all the continents close to it.

"I appeared us." Said Grindlewald "And before you ask, yes I'll be teaching how that works here and yes it is very different. For starters you can't just appearate anywhere. Areas with little population are easy, but here you have to have gone to the place you want to appearate, coordinates will do you no good."

"Why can't you appearate to a populated area?" Asked Harry

"Too much residual magic in the air." Said Grindlewald "Theoretically you can appearate anywhere, it's just that you'd end up exploding from the sudden intake of magic. You see apparition is the process of turning your body into magic and sending it somewhere else then returning it to its physical form. If you tried to come back into your physical form where there is too much residual magic you'd take in too much and your body wouldn't be able to process the massive intake of magic so quickly."

"That's why I'd explode." Said Harry "But you appeared away from Lucca."

"I never said you couldn't disappearate from a location." Said Grindlewald "Your body wouldn't take on too much excess magic doing this, although it does take on some which you'd need to siphon off while apparating."

"Okay." Said Harry "I think I understand that, so what's my first task?"

Grindlewald waved his hand and a small scorpion came to it from out of the sand. He grabbed the bug by its tail and pointed his other hand at it. The bug started to shift in shape and grow. Grindlewald let it drop to the ground and in a matter of seconds where there was once a black scorpion, now there stood a black chocobo. The bird 'warked' in greeting and looked at Grindlewald expectantly.

"Boy meet Warbeak." Said Grindlewald "For some reason he likes being transfigured, don't ask me why I'll never understand chocobo psyche. Warbeak meet your next victim."

The bird inclined his head to Harry while letting out a "wark." This if Harry didn't know better sounded like an insult.

"He's brighter than he looks." Said Grindlewald "Although not much."

"Hey!" Said Harry "I am standing right here you know."

"Your point?" Asked Grindlewald "Enough chit-chat your first task is to catch Warbeak."

"How am I supposed to do that without a Haste spell?" Asked Harry

"You'll figure it out." Said Grindlewald "Because you won't move on until you do." He waved his hand and cast a Haste spell on the chocobo.

"Now any chance I had of catching him has just gone out the window." Thought Harry "How the hell am I supposed to catch that thing?"

The chocobo had took off leaving a trail of prints which showed three two front talons and one rear one on each print. Grindlewald faded out of existence before Harry could ask him another question, however he did say before he was completely gone. "No spells, at all."

"Damnit." Thought Harry as he ran after the retreating bird. "This is crazy."

The chase lasted several hours. After about six hours of running around in the hot sun Harry needed a break. He figured Grindlewald wouldn't return until he'd caught the chocobo, so he made his way back to the river and took a nice long drink. He took a lunch of some fruit and leaned against a tree. If this was how things were going to be he'd be training for a long time.

...

Sheyna sat in her room at her mother's house in Bevelle. The last three months had been interesting ones. It started back at Giran's Manor. She and Ethan had been standing outside the cellar entrance when they saw several heat signatures on the scanner heading toward the black out area. They didn't get long to ponder this because suddenly they heard helicopters overhead. Several soldiers wearing red uniforms with an insignia of a lightning bolt with two crossed swords over it on the arms. They wore a black breastplate over their chests and each held a machine gun or a very large sword.

"Strife." Said Ethan "What the hell are they doing here?"

"Ethan get out of here!" She heard Bastian say over the communicator "We've got trouble!"

"So do we." Answered Ethan "There are soldiers everywhere!" Just then one of the soldiers spotted them and started firing. Sheyna wasted no time and started unloading clips in their direction while dodging the incoming gunfire. Shade stepped forward waving his materia incrustated staff and sending a massive amount of lightning at the group of soldiers. Ethan fired a Tornado spell at the helicopters causing them to fly off course and crash into each other. This seemed to anger the soldiers because the ones with swords started to surge forward.

Everyone stopped what they were doing when a loud rumbling reverberated throughout the whole manor and grounds. Sheyna could feel a large amount of energy in the air and one thing became clear almost immediately.

“We need to move!” She said to Ethan and Shade. The two men didn’t waste any time. They all cast Haste on themselves and started to run as far away from the manor as they could.

The strife soldiers were about to chase them, but the fleeing Black Wings coming out of the mansion caught their attention. This gave the trio enough of a distraction to make their way to the outer wall. The group thought that the Black Wings had come to engage the Strife soldiers, but they were wrong.

There was a huge rumbling sound and the ground shook violently.

“What the hell is that?” Asked Sheyna as they ran toward the outer wall.

“Whatever it is we need to get out of here before we find out.” Said Ethan

“Stealth isn’t important at this point.” Said Shade “The gate’s too far away and most likely not the best exit. We make a door.” With that he cast a powerful Quake spell causing a section of the wall to collapse. Ethan followed it up with an Aero spell which cleared a path of debris.

Once on the other side of the wall Shade turned to the other two. “We split up.” He said “Get back to headquarters and make sure you aren’t followed.” With that he ran to the nearest building and somehow managed to jump up onto the fire escape’s third tier and make his way easily to the roof where they lost sight of him.

“Must be a strength enhancement Materia.” Said Ethan “Usually only people with junctions can do that. I’ll head down the back alleys and make my way to the bar. I’d tell you to go back the way we came, but that wouldn’t be a good idea.”

Sheyna nodded, agreeing with the suggestion. She knew Lucca pretty well, and going back the way they’d come wasn’t a good option. They hadn’t had much reason to hide their approach, so they took the main streets until they got close to the manor, then they had started using back alleys and side streets to go the rest of the way. Harry had been a great help because he’d used his invisibility to check for possible

obstacles. Thinking of Harry made her immediately worry about him. Something had gone horribly wrong down there and she had a nasty feeling that it had something to do with the young wizard. There was a brilliant flash of green coming from the direction of the mansion and Sheyna immediately recognized it as Ultima. However this spell was on a level she'd never seen before. She saw the spell obliterate almost the entire mansion including the grounds. She really wanted to know what was going on.

She didn't have time to dwell on that right now though. Right now she needed to get back to Chaos Flame's headquarters. She took some side streets and managed to avoid running into anyone. She saw several SeeDs running down the main street and knew they were heading toward the mansion. With SeeD, Strife and the Black Wings all there things were bound to get ugly.

She made it back to headquarters with little trouble after that. She found several people running about the hallways when she arrived. She also heard the distinct sound of gunfire. When she turned a corner she found several Strife soldiers firing at some unarmed members. They didn't stand much of a chance and were immediately cut down by the high-powered lead bursts. Seeing these soldiers kill defenseless people made her extremely angry. She loaded up a demolition clip and fired it at the assembled soldiers. It made an explosion as it impacted one of the soldiers' breast plates killing all the soldiers almost instantly. She heard more gunfire and felt a pain shoot through her right arm, she'd been hit! She turned around and started firing at the soldiers that had snuck up on her. She wasn't sure how they'd gotten the location of the headquarters as she was sure she hadn't been followed, plus they'd been here when she arrived.

Her shot hit its mark blasting the four soldiers to bits. The bullet was still in her arm so casting a Cure spell would only complicate things. She ducked into an empty room and tore off some of the sleeve on her right arm. She used the loose material to make a makeshift bandage. After her wound was secure she made her way cautiously back into the hallway. More soldiers were headed in her direction and she gave them no time to mount an offense. She cast a Blizzaga spell at the clustered soldiers, but these were smarter than the last

bunch she'd faced. They immediately spread out, and some even put up Shell spells to reduce the damage should they be hit. Two of the five soldiers started firing at her while the other three started forward their huge Buster Swords drawn.

Sheyna cast a protect spell while zigzagging down the hallway in the opposite direction. She was out of demolition ammo and her AP rounds wouldn't cut such a close ranged fight. She hadn't brought her katana and even if she had it, she wasn't skilled enough to take on all five of those soldiers with it. "There's only one thing to do." She thought. Her decision was cemented when she ran into another group of soldiers ahead of her. Now she was outnumbered 11 to 1. She focused on the red materia in her bangle and said "Tsunami!"

Leviathan appeared out of a ball of water ready to do aid its summoner. It roared in fury and called its element to do its bidding. Water filled the corridor churning violently and pulling the soldiers under the roaring current. This lasted about five minutes and when it was over the summon dissipated leaving Sheyna standing in the middle of eleven soggy corpses. She took one of the soldiers' machine guns as well as some of the materia they were using. She found an Earth Materia and immediately equipped it to an empty slot on one of her bangles.

With the new gun she was able to make her way to the main meeting chamber where she knew they were supposed to meet. When she got to the door she knocked on it not wanting to burst in and risk being mistaken for a soldier.

"It's Sheyna open up!" She said

Ethan opened the door and she was immediately dragged inside. She found Ethan, Shade, Sheila and Von. There were a few more members, but she didn't recognize any of them.

"What the hell happened here?" She asked

"Someone was a spy." Said Von "They knew when our best people would be gone and told Strife where our base was. Now we've got

soldiers crawling all over the place. Where's Bastian and Sophia anyway?"

"I don't know." Said Sheyna "They all went into the manor when we heard this rumbling."

"So I've been told." Said Von looking at Shade and Ethan. Just then the door was burst open and several guns were pointed at a panting figure with platinum blonde hair and deep tanned skin.

"Whoa!" Said Bastian holding up his hands. "It's just me. Get everyone down to the hanger. We've got to get out of here; they're going to blow this place up!"

That was all the prompt the assembled group needed before they took off toward the hanger. Ethan had the presence of mind to ask. "Where are the others? And what's in the hanger anyway?"

"Sophia and Andrea ran to the vaults." Answered Bastian "We managed to grab a small airship from Giran's private hanger."

"What about Harry?" Asked Sheyna

"He's...well I'm not sure." Said Bastian "Something happened down there. I'll explain later, we need to get to the ship!"

Sheyna wanted to press the issue, but she knew that it wasn't the time. The group made their way to the hanger destroying soldiers as they went. It wasn't long before they reached it and found a fare sized ship that looked like a black dragon. Sheyna knew that this ship was a Ragnorok class vessel and wondered what a ronso was doing with it. People were piling into the ship through the open loading ramp. She saw Sophia and Andrea come through the doors on the opposite side of the hanger. The latter fired a Flare spell above the door causing a shower of rubble to fall and block the way. Bastian did the same to the door they had come in through.

The surviving members of Chaos Flame as well as Sheyna and the two SeeDs all boarded the ship. Sheyna made her way to the bridge where she figured Bastian would be. She wanted answers about what

had happened to Harry. When she got to the bridge she found Sophia in the pilot's seat and Bastian standing behind her telling her where to go.

"So?" She asked expectantly

"So...?" Asked Bastian confused

"What happened to Harry!" Sheyna almost yelled.

"Oh yeah." Said Bastian nervously "He...well...I don't know."

"What do you mean you don't know?" Asked Sheyna

"You saw that Ultima Spell?" Asked Sophia

"Yes..." Answered Sheyna cautiously

"Well he was in the middle of it." Said Bastian bluntly

"How was he in the middle of it?" Asked the raven haired girl.

"He was holding the materia when we were running from this monster." Said Bastian "We got the word that you guys were in trouble and were coming to help you. We got about half way when Harry suddenly started to scream and hold that scar on his head. It was bleeding really bad. His blood got onto the materia and it started glowing. There were soldiers everywhere and the monster was gaining on us. We had to leave him." He said the last part quietly the shame clear in his voice.

Sheyna was outraged. Harry had been trying to help them when he clearly didn't need to. Then when he gets in trouble they LEAVE him. "You're disgusting." She said before slapping Bastian across the face and leaving the bridge. She didn't want to be near any of them at the moment.

She headed to one of the passenger cabins and sat on a semi-comfortable couch. She didn't know how it had happened, but Harry had become very important to her in the few months she'd known him.

It was just something about him that drew her to him. She didn't think it was love or anything, but she worried about him and didn't want to see him hurt. Now though he was most likely dead. She sighed and leaned back into the couch closing her eyes.

"You know he would have told us to leave him." Said Andrea startling Sheyna out of her musings

"How do you know?" Asked Sheyna condescendingly

"It's the way he is." Said Andrea "I wouldn't worry too much if I were you. I don't think he's dead."

"Well what do you think?" Asked Sheyna

"I don't know I just know he isn't dead." Said Andrea

"He was in the middle of a massive ULTIMA!" Said Sheyna incredulously "I know he's got some weird powers, but Ultima is about as destructive as you can get."

"True." Said Andrea "But Quazicotl says his Guardian isn't dead so that means he must still be alive."

"GF can sense each other?" Asked Sheyna

"To a point." Said Andrea "The stronger they are the better they can sense each other, at first Quazicotl could barely sense Harry's guardian, but it seems to have gotten stronger."

"Well can it tell where he is?" Asked Sheyna hopefully

"No." Answered the SeeD "It can only tell that he's still alive."

"What now then?" Asked Sheyna

"Well we need to find him." Said Andrea "I think me and Ethan will exaggerate a bit on our report to the commander. I hate doing this, but if I told him we lost Harry he wouldn't be pleased."

"Yeah he seems like the kind of guy you don't want to piss off." Said Sheyna "I guess I should go apologize to Bastian."

"For what?" Asked Andrea

"I slapped him when he told me that you guys left Harry." She said sheepishly

"I've done worse." Said Andrea "Don't worry about it. Plus I'm the one that said leave him. I didn't want to but I didn't really have a choice."

Sheyna glared at her for a moment before sighing and heading back up to the bridge. Before she was out of the room she called over her shoulder. "I understand why you did it, but I still don't agree with it."

"We all have to do things we don't like doing sometimes." Said Andrea "Sad part is he would have never left any of us. We just need to find him."

Sheyna simply nodded and headed back up to the bridge. When she got there she found Bastian still rubbing his face where she'd slapped him. There was a bruise forming and Sheyna wondered why he didn't just cast a cure on himself.

"Sorry." She said when she came in. "I still think it was wrong though."

"He deserved it." Said Sophia

"What the hell are your hands made of bricks?" Asked the Ex-SeeD.

Sheyna looked down at her hands and found that she had a purple materia in one of her bangles. It was a strength enhancing materia and based on the way it was glowing it was at a high level. "I'd forgotten all about that." She thought to herself

"Where are we going now then?" She asked "And how did you get this ship?"

"We stole it." Said Sophia "It was already gassed up and ready to go. It looked like

Giran was getting ready to try and escape. All we had to do was kill the few soldiers on board and we were home free. We almost got caught by the explosion though."

"Yeah then we had to out maneuver some Black Wings and Strife soldiers." Said Bastian "That's always fun."

"Where are we going now then?" She asked again.

"We're flying in stealth mode heading north." Said Sophia "We'll probably land on the north side of Lake Macalania."

"That's awfully close to Bevelle." Said Sheyna "Isn't there usually a Garden in that area too?"

"This is an Esharian ship." Said Bastian "Stealth mode will let us land in a secluded area and then we can set up a base there. Macalania Garden shouldn't be there since Garden has other business on Gaea."

"And Bevelle?" Asked Sheyna

"Maester Griddock's guard shouldn't be a problem."

A meeting was called and everyone assembled in the hanger, as it was the biggest place on the ship. Bastian explained that someone had been a spy and that that was why headquarters had been compromised. He said he wanted a team to go back to Lucca and look around, Andrea and Ethan immediately volunteered to do this, as they really couldn't sit around with Chaos Flame. Sheyna was going to go with them but Andrea told her she'd be better off staying here. She protested of course, but eventually the SeeD won her over by saying that she could just go into Bevelle and do whatever she wanted. This made Sheyna suspicious, but she did want to see her mother again and she figured it would help take her mind off of Harry and her father.

The duo left the day after the ship landed and everyone on board immediately got to work on turning the ship into a temporary base of operations. This was difficult as there were about forty people and the ship was only made for about twenty-five at the most. Thankfully someone found a stash of capsule cottages and this helped tremendously. The small vials released to form a decent sized square building about ten by ten all around. Using this they set up areas for sleeping, eating and lab work for the technicians. Sophia and Andrea managed to get most of the important things from the vault and they were kept on the ship.

Food was a problem at first, until groups started to hunt in the nearby woods. Sheyna stayed with the group for about two weeks before she decided to venture into Bevelle. She said her farewells to Sophia and Bastian as well as a few other people she'd met over her time spent with Chaos Flame. The trek to Bevelle was a good twenty miles, but she used the time to think about what she should when she got there. Her mother didn't want her there for some reason, but she'd left a year and a half ago and whatever the reason had been for her to leave couldn't possibly be that big of deal. She'd come to find out that she was wrong, very wrong.

It took about six hours for her to make it into the city and she was very tired from having to fight off a good number of fiends. She made her way into the first traveler's lodge she saw and went up to the EFC terminal. The machine scanned her fingerprint and her information came up. She was surprised to see that she'd earned about 300,000 Gil from fiend slaying. Then again it didn't surprise her as she'd fought a lot of them with Harry and Andrea while on their trek through Spira as well as at Bessaid Garden. She figured that fighting Ultima Weapon even if it was a fake was still worth a lot of money in the eyes of whoever controlled the financing for EFC. She withdrew 20,000 as it would keep her afloat for a while and headed out to her mother's house.

When she got there she knocked on the door hesitantly. When she received no answer she knocked again this time with more force. The door was flung open and she was immediately pulled inside by a woman with long black hair and honey colored eyes. She looked like an older version of Sheyna except for a few minor differences.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Asked the woman

"Nice to see you too mom." Said Sheyna sarcastically

"I told that idiot father of yours to keep you away from here." Said her mother. "What in Sin's name is that man thinking?"

"I didn't really give him much of a choice." Said Sheyna "I was sick of being in that wasteland."

"Well at least your off the island." Said her mother "It is good to see you dear but I had reasons why I didn't want you around here."

"You never even told me what they were." Said Sheyna "I think I deserve to know why you wanted me away from here and why your relieved that I'm not on Bikinel."

"Sheyna there are some things that you don't know." Said her mother "Things that I kept from you for a very good reason, but you're right you have a right to know. You're room is still the same so put your stuff down and rest for a while. We'll talk later."

Sheyna simply nodded and headed for her room. It was the same as she remembered it. A double bed with blue sheets and comforter and a darker blue for the rest of the room. She sighed as and flopped on her bed after removing her gun belt and bangles and throwing her bag into a corner.

It was some time later when she woke up and sat down with her mother. The older woman had a very serious look on her face and the younger girl wondered what could possibly have her mother looking so grave, as she was usually a high spirited person.

"There's something I should have told you a long time ago." Started her mother. "Genson isn't your father."

Sheyna was genuinely shocked. Never in a million years had she thought she'd hear that. "What...who..." She stammered

“Let me explain.” Said her mother. “As you know I grew up in Baron. I told you I used to work for a fiend hunting guild. This was only half true. I did work with a fiend hunting guild but it wasn’t just a that. We were a group of exiles who were on the run from the remnants of the Empire. Your real father was supposed to be the rightful ruler by blood, but his ancestors had been outcast a few generations before the merger. You see the rightful ruler of Baron is supposed to have Lunarian blood.”

“Wait you mean that Lunarians aren’t just a myth?” Asked Sheyna. She was really hoping her mother was pulling some kind of joke. Lunarians were fabled to be people with a high capacity for magic, it is also said that they came from the moon which orbited the world of Baron before it merged with the others.

“No Sheyna they aren’t a myth.” Said her mother solemnly “Your father was a very talented mage he was a very brave man and died a hero.”

“Who was he?” Asked Sheyna

“As I said he was the rightful ruler of the Baron throne his name was Zavin Lunai. He had eyes just like yours but he had fair hair and skin. Really muscular too, like Genson.”

“So how’d you end up with dad then?” Said Sheyna

“Genson was your father’s best friend.” Said her mother “After he was killed Genson got me out of Baron and into Spira. We stayed together for a while after you were born and I think we did start to love each other, some. As you know though things didn’t work out and we separated. I suppose you want to know what this has to do with you not staying in Bevelle?”

“I can guess.” Said Sheyna “Some how or other they found out that I was born and I have Lunarian blood in my veins. This would explain my Limit Break anyway.”

“Yes you’ve always been good at magic.” Said her mother “I didn’t teach you to draw your own magic because I didn’t want you being identified as a high class mage.”

“How did they find out about me then?” Asked Sheyna

“I’m not sure.” Said her mother. “All I know is that about two years ago I saw a few Black Wing soldiers that I recognized from Baron. They didn’t notice me but soon after that one of them came to my door. He recognized me of course and he had his Mage Lance at my throat in a minute. He asked me about my daughter and I told him I had no idea where you were.”

“Good thing I had snuck out that time.” Said Sheyna remembering the time two years ago when she’d left home without her mother’s knowledge “I thought that was why you sent me off with dad.”

“Anyway.” Said her mother “His men ransacked the whole house and they were going to kill me until their commander called them off. He promised to ‘keep in touch’ and I made up my mind then and there to get you far away from here.”

“And now?” Asked Sheyna

“Well I’m sure you remember there being a lot of soldiers around the city during that time. Strife Corp. came in shortly after you left and the Black Wings retreated. Strife occupied the city for a while but they left recently as well.”

“Must have to do with all that stuff in Lucca.” Thought Sheyna

They had discussed what Sheyna would do now after her mother had tried, and failed, to pry information out of her about her whereabouts since leaving Bikinel. Eventually Sheyna decided to do what she’d been doing inadvertently anyway, fiend hunting. She needed to pass the time until Andrea and Ethan returned to Chaos Flame and this would give her an excuse to be out of the house without a pretext. Her mother had been worried at first, but after Sheyna explained that she’d pretty much done this on Bikinel the older woman relented.

Now she simply sat upon her bed and letting her thoughts drift once again to a missing green-eyed wizard.

...

Harry was beyond frustrated. He hadn't heard anything from Grindlewald in three days and every time he managed to get close to the chocobo it would take off at an incredible speed once again. To make matters worse the island wasn't uninhabited by a long shot. There were quite a few nasty fiends and without his sword or magic he'd been forced to either run or make the fiends kill each other.

"How the hell am I supposed to catch this bird?" He thought as he ran full speed through the scorching desert.

"Boy!" Yelled a voice over head. Harry looked in the direction of the voice and saw Grindlewald floating lazily in the air. "What's the problem?"

"The problem is that there are fiends everywhere and I don't have a weapon or any magic." Said Harry bitingly

"Of course you have magic." Said Grindlewald

"You bound my junctions and took the only materia I had." Said Harry
"You also told me to not use any Wizarding spells."

"The point of this exercise was for you to tap into your magical reserves on your own." Said Grindlewald "You've managed to do it some what. You've made yourself faster and stronger without junctions or materia."

"I have?" Asked a confused Harry

"Do you honestly think you could outrun some of those fiends or keep up with Warbeak using natural speed?"

"Well..." Started Harry

“Of course you did, your inept.” Said Grindlewald “Now here.” He waved his hands and a simple sword appeared in Harry’s hand. It wasn’t anything like the Sword of Gryffindor but it would do. “Now you should be able to kill the fiends easier. Now go catch that chocobo!” With that he vanished once again leaving Harry alone with his task.

It took another two weeks before Harry managed to catch Warbeak. He’d slowly begun to feel his magic and was getting the hang of using it to boost his speed and strength. Fighting the fiends helped with controlling this new ability as it seemed to respond better when he had a need for it.

Catching Warbeak was a bit harder then he’d thought though. Keeping up with the bird was only half the battle. The chocobo wasn’t about to give up without a fight. Whenever Harry would get close to him he’d lash out with his beak or talons some times catching the wizard off guard. Harry eventually got the hang of dodging the attacks after sustaining his fair share of scratches and bites. He caught Warbeak by running behind him and leaping onto the bird’s back. It seemed that this agitated the bird because it accelerated even faster than it had while running from Harry. It bucked wildly in an attempt to shake the wizard, but Harry wouldn’t relent. Finally the bird yielded and came to a stop. Harry slipped off of the Chocobos back while maintaining a tight grip on a few of its neck feathers.

“I caught your bird you ruddy tosser!” He yelled out to the empty air.

“It took you long enough.” Said Grindlewald appearing beside him. “You should have caught that bird a week ago!”

“Well you don’t really do a good job of explaining things.” Shot back Harry. This earned him a large blast of electricity coursing through his body.

“Don’t talk back.” Said Grindlewald. “We’re entering the next phase of your training. You need to learn to manipulate your magic to make spells without materia or junctions.”

“Why?” Asked Harry. This earned him another Thundara spell.

“You’ll learn your lesson eventually.” Said Grindlewald “Do it again and I’ll make you pay for the tosser comment. As for your ridiculous question. Using your own magic to cast a spell is usually the most powerful way to cast a spell. Junctions and materia have their purpose, but using your own magic has more satisfying results.”

“Now.” Continued Grindlewald “I’m going to teach you the four basic spells. From there you will learn on your own how to manipulate them and eventually, although I seriously doubt it considering your ineptitude, you will learn to create more complex spells.”

“First focus on your magic itself.” Explained the older wizard and Harry complied “Now force it into your hands while thinking of the spell you want to cast and the way it feels.”

“The way it feels?” Asked Harry

“Once again you prove your idiocy.” Said Grindlewald “Stupid Gryffindors. A fire spell feels hot, an ice spell feels cold, lighting feels like tingling and water is wet.”

Harry focused on his magic once again and willed into his hand while thinking about intense heat and a fire spell. A ball of fire formed in his hand and he immediately through it at his ‘master’. Grindlewald waved his hand and a barrier came up around him. The small fire ball ricocheted back at its caster hitting the younger wizard squarely in the chest. The spell singed his bare chest but it wasn’t strong enough to do any serious damage.

“Don’t try that again.” Said Grindlewald while hitting Harry with another thunder spell. “Now try a Blizzard spell.”

Harry complied and formed a ball of ice energy in his hand this time he threw it a few yards away where it hit the ground and froze the sand momentarily before dissipating. He did the same with a lighting spell and a water spell. He practiced this for a few hours and eventually got the hang of conjuring the magic away from himself and directly at his target. If Grindlewald was impressed with his progress he didn’t show it.

“What about healing and defensive spells?” Asked Harry not really caring if he did get shocked again, which he did.

“I’ll teach you Cure, Haste and Protect.” Said Grindlewald “Their the base spells for white magic and you simply temper or combine them in order to make different spells. Cure feels like a warm blanket, Haste feels like wind rushing by you and Protect should feel like a cross between a bubble and a brick wall.”

Harry practiced these spells for a few more hours and eventually got the hang of it. Again Grindlewald showed no signs of praise and simply grunted when he got the hang of it.

“Now we start the real training.” Said the older wizard grabbing his pupil’s arm and apparating to the other side of the island. “Now we’re on the opposite side of the river. All you have to do is get to the other side.”

“Why do I get the feeling it won’t be that easy.” Thought Harry

“Because it won’t be.” Said Grindlewald before disappearing once again. When he was gone Harry heard his disembodied voice say. “Watch out for those Antilions.”

Harry had no idea what an Antilion was, but a little voice in his head told him he’d be finding out very soon.

A/N: Well taht's another chapter done. As always I appreciate ANY kind of reviews be they possetive or negative, although if you leave a review saying that it sucks please give me a LEGITIMATE reason why, something like 'I hate final fantasy' whould jsut be a stupid review at this point in the story. They way I see it if you've read over 100,000 words just to say it sucks then you have no life. Next chapter will be up in a few days although it isn't as long as this one.

Battles and the Afterlife

Hermione stood in shock as she watched the sickly green beam erupt from Ron's wand and speed towards her. She had been so busy dealing with the vampires that she'd let her guard down and now it seemed she would have to pay the ultimate price. As the beam slammed into her chest she felt as though ten thousand volts of electricity had washed over her body in a fraction of a millisecond. Then all she saw was blackness.

Suddenly the blackness dissipated and she found herself standing in a strange white room standing in a line. There were so many people in the line and it seemed as though it stretched endlessly in both directions. Hermione was confused. She really hadn't known what to expect when she died, but this wasn't it. There was a man in front of her, he had brown graying hair and was tall and muscular. She tapped him on the shoulder and he turned to face her giving her a clear view of his harsh face and cold black eyes.

"What?" He barked.

"Do you know what's going on?" Asked Hermione

"Obviously we're dead." Said the man condescendingly. "Just wait in line like everyone else."

Hermione did as she was told since something told her not to get out of line.

She was glad she listened to that instinct when she heard a commotion further up the line and looked around the hulking man to see a middle aged blond man wearing a business suit start shouting.

"Doesn't this damn line ever move!" He yelled "I've been waiting her for days!" He then stepped out of line and started walking forward. He didn't even get two steps before a hole opened up in the floor and he screamed as he plummeted downward. Hermione was startled out her shock as the line started to move a bit to replace the man who had just lost his place.

She waited in line for seemed like years barely moving every few days. Finally she came to a large desk which towered over her sat. She looked up expecting to see an old sagely man based on all she'd read about life after death. She was surprised to see a young man with dirty blond hair and sparkling blue eyes sitting behind the desk. He had a scowl on his face clearly bored with what he was doing.

"Hermione Jane Granger. Welcome to the afterlife, I am Death Incarnate Zidane Tribal." He said formally "We will now begin your judgment. Let's see English Christian until your eleventh birthday where you became a witch and denounced any preconceived notions about religion. Helped Harry Potter obtain the Philosopher's Stone thereby keeping it away from Tom Riddle..." He trailed off looking at the book more closely. Hermione saw a glint in his eyes as he read and it made her slightly nervous. "Hmm." Said Zidane as he looked Hermione again. "I think I've got a special place for you, but since you are approved for Heaven I have to give you a choice. You seem to have a brilliant mind and you'd be able to meet some of the greatest wizards and witches of all time, like Merlin, if you chose to go to the Crystal Citadel."

"What?" Asked the confused witch

"Sorry." Said Zidane "You are approved to go to heaven based on your good works and accomplishments through your short life, however you are also approved to go to the Crystal Citadel which is a place where a mind like yours can thrive due to the vast amount of information housed within that structure. Heaven is a place of peace and prosperity, but you'd be unable to view the living world other than glimpses and feelings."

"And I could do that at this citadel?" Asked Hermione

"Yes the purpose of the citadel is to house the spirits I choose that have more merit than normal. It is also where I do my special projects."

"Special projects?" Asked Hermione curious

"I can't discuss that here, if you want to know agree to go the citadel."
Said Zidane

"Well." Said Hermione adopting a thinking pose with her right hand on her chin and her left arm across her chest supporting her right elbow. The temptation of gaining a vast amount of knowledge was slowly overpowering any desire she had for eternal peace, but one thing was bothering her. "If I changed my mind could I choose to go to heaven later?"

"No." Said Zidane "The only option to you once you decide to go the citadel is to descend into the underworld."

"You mean hell?" Asked Hermione alarmed.

"Well it's not fire and brimstone, but it isn't the happiest place to be." Said Zidane "I just let the souls do what they want down there, not like torturing them gives me much pleasure anyway."

"You said heaven was peaceful, so does that mean that the citadel isn't?" Asked Hermione

"There are a lot of people there." Said Zidane "You hardly get a moment's quiet, it would be similar to returning to life, except you wouldn't be alive."

"You said I can see the living world at the citadel?" Asked Hermione

"Yes." He answered "Now I'm afraid you need to choose now."

"I choose..." She was cut off by a booming voice overhead.

"Zidane you are trying our patience." Boomed the voice that seemed to have several people, all female, talking at once. "You know the girl is one of ours, you cannot have her."

"I can do whatever I please, and I'm giving her a choice, something you never bothered to give me." Said the genome.

"Do not dare defy us Zidane." Boomed the voice again.

“Choose Hermione.” Said Zidane ignoring the voices. “Ignore them they’re just bitter because they can’t control one of their pawns anymore.”

“I guess I choose the citadel then.” Said Hermione albeit a bit hesitantly “I want to know what happened to Harry and Ron.”

“Good choice.” Said Zidane giving her a genuine smile although it didn’t seem to totally reach his eyes, which Hermione noticed had an empty look in them. He snapped his fingers and a door appeared in the bottom of the monstrous desk. “Right through there.”

Hermione approached the door and it opened revealing a stairway leading upwards. As she walked toward the door the booming voice sounded once more.

“WE KNOW YOUR PLANS FOOLISH CREATURE, WE WILL LET THEM CONTINUE FOR THEY SHALL NEVER SUCCEED IT IS DESTINED!”

Hermione didn’t hear Zidane’s rebuttal because she was through the door and it closed behind her. She walked up the stairs not really knowing what to expect when she reached the top. When she got there she found herself in what looked to be a grand entrance hall that put even Hogwarts to shame.

“Welcome Hermione.” Said a voice from the side. She looked over to see Zidane, but this time he looked different. Before he’d been wearing a long white robe, now he had on an all black outfit which had a cape flowing from his shoulders. He also had two daggers strapped to his sides. His eyes looked different too. Where before she’d seen an underlying kindness in the empty blue pools, now she only saw pain and bitterness although there was a spark of something in them but she couldn’t quite tell what it was, hope?

“I thought you had to judge the souls.” Said Hermione confused

“I do.” Said Zidane “And I still am I have multiple versions of myself assigned to all the tasks I have to do.”

“So what do I do now?” Asked the witch

“You will follow me.” Said Zidane leading her down the corridor. They passed many people along the way many of them nodding respectfully to Zidane as he walked by and completely ignoring Hermione. They eventually stopped in front of a room and Zidane opened the door to reveal a simple room. It had a four poster double bed and a nightstand dressing table and a bathroom off to the side.

“This is your quarters.” Said Zidane “Although you no longer need to sleep you can if you want to, the mirror is the window to the living world. Say the person’s name and you can see them. The mirror can show you what has been and what is, but not what shall be.”

“So I can see the past and present but not the future.” Said Hermione

“Exactly.” Said Zidane “Now I’ll show you where you’ll be working and what you’ll be doing.”

He led her through the many corridors and up a few flights of stairs. Finally they came to a room which had large double doors that towered over her. When the doors opened Hermione felt as though she’d died and gone to heaven, and in a way she had. There in front of her was a library so large she couldn’t imagine it in her dreams. Zidane led her inside ignoring the longing looks she was giving to the many tomes around the vast room. Eventually they came to a door off to the side and Zidane opened it.

“Lilly I have a new partner for you.” Said Zidane “She should be able to help you with that little problem you were having with the mobility issue.”

A red-headed woman looked up from a table where she seemed to be studying blue prints and nodded to Zidane. The genome left and Hermione looked after him and noticed for the first time a blond tail swishing just at the bottom of his cape. Her eyebrows rose at this but she felt it was best not to comment. Hermione turned and regarded the woman before her. She didn’t look too much older than herself, twenty one at the most. She looked at the woman’s eyes and saw a

startling emerald green that looked vaguely familiar. Then something clicked.

“Your Lilly Potter!” Exclaimed Hermione in disbelief.

“And you’re Hermione Granger.” Said Lilly “Too bad you ended up here, did he give you the speech about knowledge and meeting famous wizards?”

Hermione frowned and nodded

“I see.” Said Lilly “I’ll tell you right now that it isn’t nearly as good as it was cracked up to be. Most of the people here will ignore you if you talk to them and Merlin has been very distracted lately and won’t tell anyone what it’s about.”

“So what are we supposed to do here?” Asked Hermione

“Well I’ve been put in charge of designing a Weapon.” Said Lilly “As much as it abhors me to do it.”

“A weapon for what?” Asked Hermione

“That’s its name.” Said Lilly “Weapon is what you call a beast of the planet which comes forth in times when the planet itself is in great peril.”

“Why are you designing one?” Asked Hermione

“So Zidane can use it.” She said “Don’t know for what, or even how he’ll awaken or build it, all I know is he asked me to design it in exchange for access to any knowledge in the library as well as guaranteeing not going into the Underworld.”

“I suppose I get the same deal for helping?” Asked Hermione

“That’s what I’d say.” Said Lilly

Hermione walked over to the table and studied the design. It seemed to be a composite of different designs which were also spread over

the table. There was one completed design that looked particularly brutal titled 'Ruby Weapon' studying the blueprints with Lilly for a while she slowly started to get the hang of what she was needed for. It seemed that the Weapons ran on life energy which was very similar to magic and therefore required precise arithmetic sequences in order to operate fully. They worked steadily for some time each double checking the others' work while jotting down notes here and there. Something inside Hermione told her that she really shouldn't help with this project as this monstrosity seemed to be unstoppable, but she couldn't bring herself to stop working.

"Lilly, why can't I not do this?" Asked Hermione

"Part of the agreement." Said the older witch "You have to help in whatever project Zidane asks of you while you're here. If you don't want to do it then you just ask him to send you to the Underworld. You get used to it though."

Hermione really didn't want to go to the Underworld and it wasn't as if she'd have to fight this thing anyway, also she was already dead so she couldn't very well die again. Sighing she went back to work for another few hours until Lilly stopped and started to leave the room.

"Where are you going?" Asked Hermione confused.

"I need a break." Said Lilly "You should take one too. I'm sure you want to check up on your friends."

Hermione nodded and she too left the room. She didn't know how she remembered where to go, but she managed to navigate her way through the many corridors and make it back to her quarters. She sat at the dressing table and looked at her reflection in the mirror. She looked exactly the same, same bushy-brown hair, same chocolate brown eyes and same everything even down to the scarlet robes she'd been wearing before she'd died. She looked at the mirror and said "Harry Potter." She watched as the mirror blurred and then focused again this time back into the catacombs. She watched Harry confront Ron and gasped when she realized that Ron had been possessed by Voldemort. She watched Harry get sucked into Temprus and then his many close calls with death since he'd been

there. Now she watched as her friend trudged through a desert looking a lot different then he had. His hair was now down to his shoulders and he was a lot more muscular then he had been. He had quite a few scars along his arms and chest, which was bare. He only wore a pair of brown trousers which were held up with a black belt. He held a simple silver sword in his hand as he trudged through the desert while trying to complete his training under Grindlewald. Suddenly she saw Harry jump backwards and a very large insect-like creature burst from the sand. It looked like a cross between a centipede, a scorpion and a crab. It had several legs along its torso and a hard looking exoskeleton. It had large claws on its first four legs near its head and had a strange tentacle like appendage coming from the top of its head. Four bug eyes sat above a maw filled with jagged fangs which dripped poison. The creature roared and lunged at Harry and the fight was on.

...

Harry leapt backwards as the Antilion lunged for him. He slashed with his sword attempting to do some damage to the monstrous creature. Unfortunately his sword simply bounced off the extremely hard exoskeleton. The creature roared again and this time the sand started to shift underneath Harry's feet into a whirlpool. He frantically tried to move away, but it was useless. Thinking quickly he thought of the most intense cold he could think of and brought his hands forward unleashing a powerful Blizzaga spell. He felt his magical energy drain away at performing such a powerful spell. He felt compensated though when the massive chunk of ice appeared around the creature's face giving it an extreme case of frostbite.

He followed up with another ice spell and it broke the creature's concentration on the whirlpool. Harry was now waste deep in sand and frantically scrambled to avoid an incoming claw swipe. He only managed to halfway dodge the attack and felt the claw dig into the skin of his chest leaving a sizable gash all the way across it. Hissing in pain he gritted his teeth and fought against the throbbing of his abdomen. He summoned a lightning spell and the beast was hurt fairly badly from the spell due to being wet from the ice spell. Seeing this gave the wizard an idea and he focused on a feeling of being submerged in water while at the same time thinking of the tingling

sensation brought about by electricity. He poured as much magic as he could into the spell without exhausting himself and shot a spell of his own devising at the beast.

“Aqua Shock!” He yelled as a ball of water that was reminiscent of the Greater Sphere appeared above the Antlion. Within the ball of water crackled a vast amount of lightning and as it slammed down on the creature the force brought it to the ground making a very large crater. Harry could smell the burning flesh of the creature, but couldn’t see the damage because of the explosion of light that burst from the water sphere when it hit the monster. As the light faded and the smoke cleared he could make out the monster struggling to regain its footing.

“What the bloody hell is it going to take to kill this thing?” Mused Harry aloud. He still has some magic power left, but not enough to do that kind of spell again. He was getting tired from the blood loss through the wound in his chest. He would have cast a cure spell on himself, but he didn’t want to waste the magic as the wound wasn’t life threatening, at east he hoped it wasn’t.

The Antlion came out of the crater and roared. The ground started shaking and Harry struggled to regain his footing. He failed and fell on his back. The creature took this opportunity to lunge at him again intent on eviscerating him with its claws. Harry brought up his sword in an attempt to block the claw swipe and managed to deflect it at the cost of having his sword dislodged from his grip. Now he was unarmed with only a minimal amount of magic power left at his disposal. The creature was bringing its claw back down and this time it put it right through Harry’s left shoulder blade. It did the same with the other claw to his right shoulder and Harry cried out in pain.

A voice in his head started taunting him. “What’s the matter boy?” It said harshly “Proving to everyone how useless you are?” The voice sounded eerily similar to Uncle Vernon. “Just like your worthless parents, good for nothing useless FEAK!”

Harry roared in fury and magical energy cursed through his body forcing the creature to retreat and withdraw its claws from Harry’s shoulders. The wizard jumped through his feet and had the creature

been capable of feeling fear it would have when it looked into the burning green eyes that glowed with an otherworldly light. Harry focused his magic and cast a Curaga spell on himself immediately healing the wounds. He brought both hands forward and thought about the hottest fire and severest lighting he could. Then with a cry he released a devastating spell.

“Flare!” He cried in fury. A ball of heat enveloped the creature growing larger and hotter with each passing second. It shrieked in pain as it was cooked within its exoskeleton. Its eyes popped due to the boiling fluids within and its flesh slowly turned into ash. The spell lasted about five minutes and when it was over Harry looked around for something else to kill. He was still angry and needed to release some of the excess energy. Luckily for him a flock of Giant Zuu, birds that look like huge vultures, came swarming around the site of the battle looking to get an easy meal. Harry simply waved his hand and a tornado appeared catching the birds off guard.

It seemed that the birds weren’t that stupid though as they started to use their massive wings to counteract the growing wind. Harry let out a snarl and poured more magic into the spell slowly overpowering the birds. An aura of golden-green energy flowed from him as he slowly came to get control over this new power. He launched a Firaga spell at the growing maelstrom creating a twirling inferno. Sand swept up everywhere as well as bones that were buried long ago. All this debris didn’t even touch Harry though as his aura seemed to deflect it. He let the spell end and saw that the birds were nothing more than ashes now.

He continued walking expecting exhaustion to overtake him, but it never came. He eventually made it to the river after defeating several more fiends and still not feeling tired. He looked over at the other bank and briefly pondered crossing it so he could finish his training faster. Eventually he decided against it though. The fiends on this side of the river were stronger and he needed to learn how to control this new power. It seemed that the moment of anger had allowed him to channel the increased power that now dwelled within him. He decided to try and unlock his junctions. If he could do that then he may be able to use his stocked spells to learn how they felt so he

could cast them without junctions. He sat against a palm tree on the river bank and focused on entering his mindscape.

...

He entered his mind to see Seth slashing a fiend with his scythe. The Drake roared in pain before disintegrating into nothingness.

"Bout time you got here." Hissed the serpent. "I managed to keep them from getting into your memories, but their starting to get more aggressive. And their appearing more often."

"Thanks for the help." Said Harry "I just figured out how to get to my increased power."

"Good job." Said Seth "So what now?"

"I'm going to try to break the seal on my Junctions." Said Harry "If Grindewald wants to train me this way then I'm going to start making my own rules."

"Sounds good to me." Said Seth "Although that barrier around your junctions is pretty strong."

"I think it's a test." Said Harry "He's not teaching me too many straightforward things. Just giving me pushes in the right direction."

"He also calls you a useless moron with no hope of ever grasping the finer points of magic." Said Seth

"That too." Said Harry

He walked up to the now closed off junctions chamber and tried to force it open using his magic. The barrier shuddered under the force but it didn't budge. He tried again exuding more force this time and the barrier started to crack. He tried once more putting all his power into it this time. He slammed the barrier with pure magical energy causing it to be completely obliterated.

"Well." Said Seth "That wasn't too hard."

"Now I'm exhausted." Said Harry

"Just tell me what you wanted to do with the junctions and I'll do it while you're asleep." Offered Seth

"Take off all the augmentations I just want to be able to cast the spells." Said Harry "If I need to I can always set them back up later."

"You're the boss." Said Seth

"Hey Seth...?" Asked Harry getting ready to voice a question he'd had for a while

"What?" Asked the guardian

"Why are you acting so different now?" Asked Harry "At first you were all 'Die foolish mortals.' And now you're acting more....human."

"Being junctioned to you reminds me of who I used to be." Said Seth "If it bothers you I can go back to addressing you as 'Human' and not bother offering any advice unless you ask."

"No. I was just wondering." Said Harry "I think I'll take you up on that nap now."

...

As time passed Harry continued to train in the desert, venturing to the river to get water or eat from the fruit trees as well as sleep. It seemed that the fiends didn't bother him near the river, which was something he was thankful for. He hadn't used his stocked magic to increase his strength or speed since he'd unlocked his junctions. Instead he focused on using his own energy to make himself faster or stronger. This had limits though and he found that at most he could go five times faster or be five times stronger than normal by using his own magic. This was more than enough to handle the fiends in the area though. He'd given up with the conjured sword all together and instead practiced magic in order to dispatch the fiends. When he

cleared his mind of the mako fiends though he always had the Sword of Gryffindor.

He didn't know how much time had passed since he'd started training, but he did know that his hair was now growing below his shoulders and that he was starting to get some facial hair. Using this as a rough calculation of a few months he decided to go back to the other side of the river and see what exactly his 'Master' had in store for him. All it took was a running start and then a boosted jump to get across the river. He landed easily and immediately dodged a cutting hex aimed at his head.

"Well I see you've gotten faster." Said Grindlewald "I thought you'd be back by now, I guess I had too high of an expectation."

"Sod off codger." Said Harry and immediately dodged a lightning bolt.

"Nimble too." Said Grindlewald "There may be hope for you yet, even if it's a faint one. He waved his hand and shot a Reducto at Harry who again dodged it. "Hmm, Duel me boy! Wizard magic only."

Harry needed no more prompting and waved his hand shooting a cutting hex at Grindlewald. He was a bit shocked when the recoil from the spell caused a gash on his hand.

"I thought you knew how to control the power flow by now!" Yelled Grindlewald "Pathetic."

Harry started flinging every kind of hex he knew at Grindlewald and the wizard just kept dodging them. Harry increased his speed but still the older wizard dodged them nimbly. After the first curse was thrown Harry was consciously trying to suppress the flow of magic, therefore he was hard pressed to dodge the return cursed shot at him by Grindlewald. The former Dark Lord was sticking to cutting and blasting hexes, but suddenly upped the ante.

"Crucio!" He shouted and a dark red beam caught Harry as he was dodging some debris from a blasting hex.

Harry slumped to the ground under the excruciating pain, but he refused to scream. Grindlewald simply chuckled at Harry's attempts to fight the curse. "What's wrong boy can't take the pain." Grindlewald then took his other hand and pointed the palm towards Harry "Crucio Maximus!" A huge beam of dark red energy connected with Harry and this time he couldn't help but scream. The pain was so intense that his mind could barely comprehend it. A small voice in the back of his head was telling him to block out the pain, but he couldn't. After what seemed like an eternity, but was only twenty minutes Grindlewald let him out of the curse. "Next phase of training, you will learn all the spells in the books which are in the cave, and you will duel me everyday until you can break that curse."

"You're crazy." Wheezed Harry hoarsely

"Crucio." Said Grindlewald lazily pointing a finger at Harry and watching him thrash in pain for a second before releasing him. "Maybe this will work better than the lightning bolts as a means for you to mind your tongue." He then levitated Harry into the cave where he'd awoken seven months ago and dropped him unceremoniously onto the ground. "We start tomorrow morning." With that he left Harry lying on the floor still in a great deal of pain, but determined to beat Grindlewald at his own game even if it killed him.

...

"Are we there yet?"

"No."

"Are we there yet?"

"No."

"Are we-"

"Ethan if you ask me that one more Hynedamned time I am going to shove my gunblade so far up your ass that you'll feel it when you swallow." Growled Andrea

“Spoilsport.” Muttered Ethan “I’m just tired of walking. We’ve been doing this almost a year.”

“And we’re almost back to Bevelle.” Said Andrea “It’s not our fault that Baron decided to occupy Spira and Strife decided to attack, or that the commander basically abandoned us.”

“Well when you talked to him and told him Harry was dead he sounded a bit distracted.” Said Ethan

“Something isn’t right inside Garden.” Said Andrea “We haven’t been able to contact any of the gardens in Spira.”

“When I hacked into the files from Moonflow a few months back I read something about a mission in Glacia that involved the majority of Garden.”

“That’s probably why we can’t contact them.” Said Andrea “That still doesn’t explain why the commander abandoned us.”

“He said he’d contact us with new orders when he could get around to it.” Said Ethan

“The commander never puts off anything.” Said Andrea “He was angry that we ‘let Harry die.’ And then he said for us to hold position in Lucca. Then we had to leave Lucca because the Black Wings started to bomb it.”

“This whole thing is getting out of control.” Said Ethan “I don’t even know who the enemy is anymore.”

“Well we need to find Bastian and see what we can do.” Said Andrea “Quazicotl says that Harry’s GF is getting stronger so that must mean wherever he is he’s doing a lot of fighting.”

“We’re going to need all the help we can get.” Said Ethan “Especially if that info we found was for real.”

“We have to assume it is.” Said Andrea “We can’t let something like that go.”

...

Harry crawled back into the cave after yet another brutal match with Grindlewald. This time they started off evenly matched, but then Grindlewald had somehow pulled even more power out of nowhere and he was even faster and stronger than Harry. By Harry's estimate he'd been training for a year now. He tried not to worry about what his fiends in either world could be going through in his absence as that had cost him in many battle on this island. The books Grindlewald had given him had been written by the Dark Lord himself and they were an invaluable source of knowledge. Grindlewald had detailed every Wizarding spell he knew and how to cast it on Temprus without blowing yourself, or someone else up unintentionally. One book Harry had found particularly disturbing was titled 1001 Lethal Uses of Accio: And More. It turned out that there were more than 1001 ways to kill someone with the summoning charm, and although Harry loathed admitting it, on some level he found it fascinating.

"Boy tomorrow we'll be practicing Apparation." Grindlewald had said "So make sure you read up on that."

Harry had done so and come to understand that apparation here was much the same as in the Wizarding world. You just had to watch out for magical pockets which would cause you to explode if you passed through them. The whole speech about not apparating near people was simply a precaution. It could be done as long as the magical pockets were avoided.

This is what found Harry standing outside the next morning before the first sunrise waiting for Grindlewald to appear. He did and then he looked at Harry expectantly.

"Well?" He finally asked

"What?" Asked Harry

"Stupid boy! Apparate around the island!" Roared Grindlewald

“Fine.” Said Harry. He focused on his destination behind the wizard and took a step before turning and feeling the familiar feeling of being forced through a tube. As the magic took him over he could suddenly sense the magic in the air and saw that there were certain places where it was extremely thick and others where there was hardly any at all. He drifted toward one of these thin places and suddenly found himself standing on the opposite side of the river. He was happy he’d managed to apparate, but peeved that he hadn’t gotten to the right destination. He tried again and this time kept his destination firmly in mind. As he got close to it he felt the magic tightening around him and backed off of that destination. He got as close to it as he could finding a thin portion of magic and appeared roughly where he had intended in the first place.

“Well it’s a start.” Said Grindlewald. He then grabbed Harry’s arm and they had disappeared before the wizard even blinked. When they reappeared they were still in a desert, but it was a bit different.

“Merlin it’s cold!” Exclaimed Harry “Where the hell did you take me?”

“Next phase of your training.” Said Grindlewald “We’re on Glacia in an area called Great Glacier.”

“Harry quickly cast several warming charms on himself as he was still shirtless and the frigid air wasn’t too comfortable on his skin. “What am I supposed to do here?”

“Survive.” Said Grindlewald before disappearing once again leaving a shivering wizard alone on the icy tundra.

...

Antym Leonheart kneeled before the immaculately clothed woman who sat on a throne within Baron castle. She was his sorceress and it was his duty to protect her and carry out her every whim no matter what. A voice in the back of his head was trying to tell him that this was going against everything he was supposed to stand for, but a more prominent and distinctly feline voice was roaring the voice of reason down and telling Antym that he could not fail his sorceress under any circumstances.

"You called for me Lady Mia?" Asked Antym

"Yes I have a job for you my faithful knight." Said the Sorceress. She was a beautiful young woman with long silky black hair with a few brown highlights and she had beautiful ruby colored eyes. She wore a flowing silver gown that accentuated her every curve clinging to her in all the areas that mattered while still leaving enough room to remain tasteful. She stuck her perfectly manicured finger out and began tracing it along Antym's jaw line while explaining her request. "I need you to take care of Sorceress Vadne so that I can take her power before that bitch Anastasia."

"It shall be done my lady." Said Antym kissing her hand.

She smiled at him making him feel honored by such a gesture. "See that is dear Antym." She crooned "Now I think we need to have a more intimate discussion before you leave for Great Glacier." Antym simply nodded and left with the sorceress to her bed chamber.

...

"Now we're going to need to set some ground rules." Said Zidane pacing in front of a silver haired man with crimson eyes and a silver tail much like his own. "I'm going to let you out of the Underworld and return you to Gaia, well not Gaia anymore, but you get the point. You can start as much trouble as you like, but you must procure the key. Do you understand?"

"Who are you to order me around Zidane?" Hissed Kuja "I will not be your puppet. Serving you would be no better than serving our old master."

"You'll find I can be a hundred times more generous or a hundred times harsher than Garland could ever dream." Said Zidane "You'd find it in your best interests to cooperate."

"And if I refuse?" Asked Kuja "I'll send you back anyway and make you do what I want."

"So I don't have much of a choice do I?" Asked Kuja

"You could stay down here where Sephiroth will keep trying to kill you for 'blasphemy'" Said Zidane

"You know I think I will go to Temprus." Said Kuja suddenly changing his mind "I don't really feel like dealing with a silver-haired psycho who has a god-complex."

"I knew you'd see things my way." Said Zidane "Have fun." With that he waved his hand and Kuja disappeared from the Underworld and found himself standing at the northern part of Myst near the border of Glacia. He looked behind him and saw the towering form of the Iifa Tree. He smirked as he walked east to see what trouble he could cause for the meddlesome wizard which seemed to be giving his brother no end of grief.

...

Hermione stared at Harry as he walked through the blistering cold of Great Glacier and sighed. He'd already suffered so much already and yet he kept on going through more. No matter what he went through he always got back up. She just hoped he'd be able to keep doing it, although deep down she knew that everyone had a breaking point. She decided to check on Ginny next and this didn't improve her mood much at all, especially after witnessing Voldemort's ritual. Next she decided to see what the Dark Lord was doing and she was surprised when the mirror showed three separate images. One was of Voldemort practicing with his new found power on some unfortunate Death Eaters. Next was Ron attending another Order Meeting at Hogwarts. The last one confused her though. It just showed ocean and was moving in one direction, albeit very slowly.

She'd had enough of looking at the living world for the moment and decided to explore the citadel some more. Walking out of her room she chose some corridors at random and eventually came to what seemed to be some sort of workshop. There were several people building what looked like a cross between ships and panes. One ship caught her eye. It wasn't nearly completed but the standard on it was interesting. It had a red background and three figures standing on it.

A golden stag, a big black dog and a wolf. Under the stags foot was a rat that seemed to be in great pain from having itself crushed. As she approached the ship she started hearing two very loud and seemingly angry male voices.

“Damnit Padfoot why did you install the propulsion system before we finished the engine core?”

“Hey I only did what you told me to do!”

“Then you obviously don’t listen very well.”

“I can’t work well on an empty stomach!”

“Well you’re like the only one here that needs to eat.”

“That’s not my fault.”

“Yes it is.”

“How?”

“Where should I begin, oh yes you let yourself fall through the Veil!”

“I did not!”

“Yes you did. I saw it. How stupid do you have to be to taunt a Death Eater who is trying to kill you while you’re standing in front of a lethal object!”

“It still wasn’t my fault Prongs!”

“And then Harry almost followed you! If it wasn’t for Moony he’d be stuck here too.”

“Don’t you think I know that? Why do you always have to bring this up?”

“Because it pisses me off. First I die because Wormtail was a traitor, then you get thrown into prison for listening to that old codger’s orders to give my son to Hagrid!”

“Look James you are really starting to piss me off now.” Hermione heard growling after this and then she heard the distinct sound of a dog barking. Next thing she knew a large black dog came barreling out of the ship followed by a large grey stag. Hermione recognized the dog instantly as Sirius.

“Sirius!” She called. The dog stopped and looked at her. Unfortunately this allowed the stag to catch up with him and give him a good kick to the backside. The dog leapt into the air and then changed back into Sirius before he hit the ground.

“Alright James you got it out of your system.” Said Sirius “I know you’ve been waiting to do that since I got here, but Lilly always talked you out of it.”

The stag changed back into a man with messy black hair, glasses and brown eyes. Hermione had seen pictures of James Potter, but actually seeing him and seeing how much like Harry he looked was amazing.

“He really does look just like you.” She said

“Hermione what are you doing here?” Asked Sirius

“Long story.” Said the witch

“We’ve got nothing but time.” Said James “Harry isn’t here is he?”

“No.” Said Hermione

“Padfoot, I think we need to check back up on the living world.” Said James pulling out a small mirror. Sirius leaned over his shoulder and Hermione could tell by their facial expressions that they were watching Harry. It took them about two hours to see the key points of what they’d missed, but when they were done they both had very angry looks on their faces. They looked at each other and said one

word. "Merlin." Hermione was confused when she saw the two Marauders take off out of the large hanger and she decided to follow them.

...

Harry was cold. In fact cold was a vast understatement, he was freezing. The cold seemed to penetrate his warming charms as fast as he could make them. He'd conjured a cloak to cover himself, but it still didn't do much good. He'd been wandering around the Glacier for almost three weeks. Food had been a problem at first until he'd resorted to Fiend meat. It wasn't at all tasty, but it got the job done. His time here had taught him several things as well. He knew now that blue skinned, scantily clad women were extremely dangerous as they'd use their Entice spell to get you close, then they'd try to freeze you with their Ice Breath attack. He'd learned that werewolves kicked extremely hard and finally the most important lesson of all; dodge the laser beams that the cactuar-sized robots shot out.

Now found him walking through a seemingly endless snow field. Every so often the wind would blow extremely hard causing him to stumble and get turned around. This didn't seem to deter the fiends however, as every time he stumbled something would come from out of nowhere and attack him. This time it was an Ice Drake. The miniature dragon shot an ice ball out of its mouth which Harry batted aside lazily with his hand. He'd learned to focus his magic to a specific point in his body to have different effects. He countered by casting a Firaga spell on it and followed it up with an Incendio spell. The powerful fire spells made short work of the Drake and Harry continued on until he ran into some blue bombs.

These creatures were interesting in that they were fire elementals which absorbed ice and water attacks. This made them a pain to kill. Harry however had learned to use spells that had no elemental power at all. All he did was cast a Flare spell that covered all of them and they died with a massive explosion. All that remained of them were bomb cores which Harry used to draw out some more Firaga spells as they also helped keep him warm in this harsh environment.

He continued on his trek through the frigid wasteland until he came upon a quaint cottage. Throwing caution to the wind he strode to the cottage and knocked on the door. He waited several minutes and knocked again, harder. Still he received no answer and decided that the house must be deserted. He tried the door handle and found it to be unlocked. Walking inside he took in the new area. There seemed to be two rooms in all. The first room had comfortable looking chairs, although they were worn considerably. There was also a fireplace that conveniently had some wood in it. Harry cast a Fire spell at it and the wood ignited immediately sending warmth through the room. He checked the next room and found a quaint bedroom. There was a full bed sitting in a corner and a bedside table beside it. He also noticed that there was a makeshift loo in a smaller side room off of the bedroom. The loo consisted of a chair with a hole in it over a hole in the floor.

Harry decided that he'd take a rest in this cottage for a bit. It looked as though the owner had left in a hurry and had been gone for some time. He went back into the first room and stretched out on one of the worn couches. It was a bit lumpy due to the uneven distribution of stuffing, but it was better than the hard ground he'd been sleeping on. He cast a locking charm on the door and settled in for a good night's sleep.

While sleeping Harry had a very strange dream. He was running through a forest on all fours. This in and of itself was strange, but what was even stranger was that it felt natural. He could feel the wind rushing through his fur, he could smell the different scents of animals and fiends in the air and he could feel his claws scrape the ground as he ran. He didn't know what he was running toward or from all he knew was that he had to run. Then suddenly he stopped running and looked up at the sky to see all four moons of Temprus were full and shining brightly in the night sky. He let out a howl in recognition of the four lunar bodies and he felt adrenaline pour through him as he did so.

Harry awoke with a start and fell off of the couch. He stood up and suddenly realized that everything seemed taller. Then he realized he wasn't standing upright, but on four legs. Panicking he started to run around frantically until he managed to get a grip on reality and form some rational thoughts.

“Alright, I obviously transformed into my Animagus form.” He thought
“Now how did this happen, and how do I get back?”

“Good question.” Said Seth “That was a really weird dream you had, maybe that had something to do with it.”

“That’s impossible.” Said Harry “From what I’ve read about Animagi it takes years of training before you transform completely.”

“Since when has impossible applied to you?” Asked Seth mockingly

“Touché.” Said Harry “But I still need to get back to normal.”

“Sitting in here won’t do you any good.” Said the guardian

“I suppose.” Said Harry “Now how do I get out of here without hands to open the door?”

“Use magic.” Said Seth

“It’s worth a try.” Said Harry

He walked over to the door and put his right forepaw on the handle while thinking “Alohamora!” There was a clicking sound as the locking spell was released and the door swung open. Instantly Harry noticed the difference in the way his human form and animal form adjusted to the temperature. He didn’t feel nearly as cold as he had before. He had the sudden urge to run through the snow at top speed, and he didn’t try to quell it. He took off out of the door and used his magic to boost his speed. He had no idea where he was going, but instinct was guiding him and he let it take its course.

...

Antym flew over the frozen tundra of Glacia in an aircraft that looked like a cross between a fighter jet and a flying saucer. These were called Skyrves by the Black Wings and were primarily used for air assault missions. The good thing about these ships was their stealth capabilities as well as their hover feature and considerable amount of

firepower they possessed. He was heading for where Vadne's cottage was supposed to be, and then he would dispatch the sorceress and use a crystal given to him by his mistress to collect her power when she passed on. Again part of him was trying to fight the hold the sorceress had on him, but it was too much. Griever had almost complete control and he'd found that the GF had some serious issues regarding sorceresses. From what he could tell Griever used to be a knight, who apparently failed to protect his sorceress.

Now the guardian thought that Mia was his sorceress and it was using Antym as its means to protect and serve her. Had Antym known that taking this mission for Garden would have such detrimental effects on him, he'd have never done it. Now he was a traitor and his friends as well as the one person he thought he might actually love were against him.

"Damnit Griever let me go!" He screamed mentally

"Must protect sorceress." Roared the feline voice

"Your sorceress is dead Griever." Said Antym "Mia is just using you to...ahh!" He screamed as Griever tightened its hold on him. They were now close to the cottage and Antym popped the hatch and jumped out of the Skyve. Thanks to his junctions he could survive this fall without so much as a scratch. He landed on his feet while bending his knees to keep from losing his balance. He looked around and saw the cottage in the distance. He walked up to it and saw that the door was hanging open. He went inside and found the place completely deserted.

"Damn sorceress." He said bitterly "Now I'm going to have to hunt around this cold waste of space."

He walked back out of the house and found some fiend tracks going away from the door. Not having any other leads he decided to follow them, knowing that sorceresses sometimes controlled fiends to do their bidding. His junctions made his speed very impressive and he soon caught up to a medium sized white wolf. The creature turned around to face him and Antym saw bright emerald eyes. Another odd

thing about the wolf was the discolored fur above its right eye. It was grey and in the shape of a lightning bolt.

“Going back to see your mistress beast?” He asked it. The animal looked at him confused before turning around and walking on. Antym didn’t like being ignored and he raised his hand and shot a Firaga spell at the wolf. He was genuinely surprised when the animal dodged it and was even more surprised when the wolf started glowing with a green aura and cast a Firaga of its own at the knight. Antym unsheathed his gunblade which was a modification of the Lionheart model. While that model had a glowing blue blade forged of energy crystals, and a trigger reinforced with dragon fangs and adamantine. His gunblade had a crimson blade which glowed with the power of Aura Stones and a trigger reinforced with Inferno Fangs and an Adamantium alloy. He called his gunblade the Lion’s Claw and he strongly believed it more powerful than a normal Lionheart blade.

He slashed the incoming fire spell and charged at the wolf. The animal held its ground waiting for Antym to get close before casting a spell that the Knight had never seen before. It was a red beam which came out of the wolf’s raised forepaw. The Knight dodged it and slashed at the wolf with his gunblade. This time he managed to inflict a glancing blow before the animal dodged again. Before he could get off another strike with his blade the wolf had lunged at him with considerable speed and sank its teeth into his left forearm. He put all his power into his right hand gripping the hilt of his gunblade tightly and punched the wolf as hard as he could. The blow sent the animal flying several yards away where it landed in a heap in the snow. Antym raised his and gathering energy for a spell he was sure would finish the beast off. White energy came into his hand and he thrust it forward with a cry of “Holy!”

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Harry went flying through the air when the fist hit his jaw. He could tell that it was broken. He landed in a heap and struggled to throw off the daze that the blow had put him in. He managed to get back onto his feet just in time to see a massive amount of white energy surging in

front of his opponent. He heard him cry out "Holy!" And Seth was screaming at him to move. He didn't think he could move fast enough to get out of the way, so he did the only thing he could think of and cast a Reflect Spell. The energy slammed into the barrier before being thrust back with twice the force that it had come at him.

Harry watched as the spell hit its target and was waiting to hear the man's screams of agony as he died. Unfortunately for Harry they never came. Instead he heard the man laugh and he saw the energy get absorbed back into the man's body.

"What the hell!" He thought startled

"Junctions." Said Seth "It's possible to junction yourself so that you can absorb almost any elemental spell. I knew someone that knew how to do it, but I never found that secret."

"So you think he can absorb anything?" Asked Harry

"You'll have to find out." Said Seth "He's got a very strong guardian junctioned, much stronger than me so I wouldn't put it past him to be very well equipped."

Harry didn't respond because he had to dodge a thrust from the man's gunblade. He noticed that the man's hood had come off and now his face was totally visible. He had dark silver hair that came down to about his neck with bangs that hung in front of his blue-grey eyes. His eyes didn't seem to match his face, nor did his hair. It was like something was different about him from a normal person that Harry just couldn't place. He ducked another gunblade slash and countered with a claw slash of his own. The man backed off a bit and Harry took the opportunity to cast a Cura spell on himself to fix his broken jaw.

"I'm sick of playing these games you stupid beast." He snarled "Now die!" With that he raised his blade and in the blink of an eye he was gone. Harry knew he was moving extremely fast and he barely managed to see the blur in front of him before he felt the blade slash through his left side and he was sent flying through the air. The man sent a Flare spell after him and Harry didn't have the strength to block

it. He felt the spell slam into him and as it charred his fur and skin he blacked out.

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A/N: Hope everyone enjoyed the chapter. Please review it is always good to get feedback. I have to say tht it has been good latelyly compared to what it used to be and I hope it remains so. This story is doing a lot better then I thought it would and I'm glad so many people enjoy it. Next chapter will be up by Thursday or Friday, until then I hope life finds everyone well.

Battle of Great Glacier

Harry felt himself coming back to consciousness and was surprised to feel no pain. He opened his eyes and saw that he was in a cave. He looked around and saw what looked like a woman in her fifties sitting in a chair made from animal furs. She had long brown hair that had some grey in it and her face held a few lines which all women got with age. Her eyes though were the oddest thing. They were like Grindlewald's eyes. Like this woman was much older than she appeared to be. Harry was still in his wolf form and he could smell the scent of fresh meat coming from somewhere in the cave. The woman noticed he was awake and addressed him.

"You were in bad shape when I found you young man." She said. Harry was a bit startled that she knew he was a human, but he wasn't too surprised since he'd seen a lot of things so far that he was sure not much could surprise him anymore. "I see you're stuck in that form. That oaf of a wizard should have taught you how to control that."

"She knows Grindlewald?" He thought

"Yes I do." Said the woman "I am Sorceress Vadne and I have met the man on more occasions than I'd like to remember."

"So do you know how I can turn back?" He thought knowing she'd hear him.

"I am not a witch from your world, therefore I do not." Said the sorceress

"Great." Said Harry

"Look on the bright side." Said Seth

"What bright side?" Snapped Harry

"At least you're not cold." Said the guardian laughter clear in his voice

"You're a real mate there Seth." Said Harry sarcastically

“You can talk to you’re GF later.” Said Vadne “Right now you need to figure out how to turn back into yourself. As best I understand it you should feel how to do it naturally.”

Harry tried to feel how to do it, but he was coming up short. He tried several times before he gave up slumping to the ground. He smelled the meat again and his stomach let out an involuntary rumble.

“I see you smell the were-rabbit.” Said Vadne “You can have it if you like; you’re going to need your strength soon.”

Harry’s animal instincts took over and he saw the rabbit carcass in another corner of the cave. He greedily ate it and this time the fiend meat was satisfying to his canine taste buds. He was thankful that the were-rabbits were a lot larger than their cousins on his world because he was very hungry and the meal managed to sate that hunger and invigorate him.

“Thank you for helping me.” Said Harry mentally

“You’re welcome young one.” She said “I couldn’t let you die out there; I still can’t believe that idiot left you in the middle of the tundra with no idea of what you were supposed to do.”

“He does have a rather warped sense of training.” Said Harry

Vadne chuckled but it was cut off as she suddenly snapped to attention and looked around the room as if looking for something. She went over to a trunk sitting against the cave wall and opened it. She took out a clear crystal and started to concentrate. The crystal, which was white, suddenly turned a deep blue and started to glow brightly. She took a deep breath and went back to the trunk. She took out a chain and shot a concentrated fire spell at the crystal when she placed the chain against it, in order to weld the two together. She brought the necklace over to Harry.

“Wear this young one.” She said kindly “It contains a good deal of my power, I’m going to pass on soon and I don’t want all my power going to either of the other two sorceresses.” She put the chain around Harry’s neck and he felt warmth flow from it.

"What do you mean by passing on?" Asked Harry although he was pretty sure he knew already knew.

She smiled kindly at him before answering. "I mean I'm going to die." She said calmly "I've lived a very long life and my time is almost here. Although it seems that someone wants to cut short what little time I have left."

"Who?" Asked Harry

"He is on his way here as we speak." She said "I can't harness my powers as well as I used to. Otherwise he would be no problem, but as I am I do not think I will be able to stop him."

"I'll stop him." Said Harry

She chuckled again and ran her hands over Harry's fur. "That is very noble of you young one, but I don't think you can. Even if you managed to get back into your true form he is much stronger than you."

She got up and went back over to her chest "Do you know how to use a gunblade?"

"I know how to use a sword." He answered

"That's a start." She pulled out a gunblade that had a silver trigger and a black blade which had a white shaft going down the middle of it. "This is known as the Blast Edge. It isn't the strongest of gunblades, but it is a very powerful weapon when wielded right. When you manage to get back into your human form you may have it."

Harry wanted to say he didn't want it or need it, but something about it made him want to wield that weapon so instead he accepted it. "I'll be sure to use it when I turn back into a human."

"Now I must attend to the matter of our guest." Said Vadne

"But you said you can't defeat him!" Said Harry

"Sometimes young one we have to fight battles that we know we'll lose." She said before walking toward the cave entrance. Harry tried once more to turn back into a human and he felt something stir in him, but he still couldn't manage it. He followed the sorceress out of the cave and emerged into an area where a hot spring bubbled filling the air with hot steam. He saw Vadne standing not far from the cave entrance and he saw another figure approaching her.

As the figure drew closer Harry realized that it was the same man he'd fought earlier. This revelation made his blood boil. He'd been hurt by that man and he wanted to return the favor.

"Do not interfere Harry." Said Vadne waving her hand. Harry felt his body go rigid and he was forced to do nothing but watch. He was eerily reminded of the night Dumbledore died atop the astronomy tower, where again he'd been able to do nothing but watch.

"If you manage to break that Stop spell I've re-equipped your junctions." Said Seth "When you fight again you'll be stronger if you use your magic and junctions together."

"I'm trying to break it, but it's too strong." Said Harry

"That was a nice gunblade." Said Seth "If you want I can give you my knowledge of how to use it."

"Do it." Said Harry

"Alright, this may hurt a bit." Said Seth

Harry mentally groaned, preparing himself to be forcibly infused with knowledge. Meanwhile he watched as the figure approached Vadne.

"Well I see you decided to come out and face me sorceress." Said Antym

"You are running a fool's errand boy." She said "Do not think that just because I am old and without a knight that I am defenseless."

“Your power is no where near what it used to be.” Said Antym “I will crush you and deliver your power to my mistress.”

He lunged forward intent on ending the fight quickly only to hit an invisible barrier. He backed up and charged again only to hit the same barrier. Vadne didn't waste any time in countering. She showed surprising agility for a woman her age by moving extremely fast and casting a plethora of spells at the Knight. He allowed the spells to slam into him absorbing the magical energy.

“Thank you.” He said mockingly “I needed a good recharge after dealing with that beast.”

“So you absorb elements do you boy?” She said “Well then I won't use any.” With that she started moving even faster and cast successive Flare spells. Antym was unable to dodge all of them and was severely burned on his face, chest and right arm. Had he been a normal person those spells would have killed him, but thanks to Griever augmenting his strength he was able to withstand the destructive spell. He charged again this time pouring energy into his weapon and penetrating the barrier around the sorceress. He slashed at her neck but was shocked when she blocked it with her hand. She waved her other hand and sent him flying into the hot spring.

She didn't waste any time capitalizing on this opportunity. Waving her hands she manipulated the water to form a ball around the Knight and raised it into the air. She used her other hand to form three ice spears which she sent straight at the entrapped warrior. He wasn't done yet however and with a roar and unleashing raw power he broke the ball of water and batted the incoming spears aside by twirling around his gunblade in a circle around his body. He cast a Tornado spell on the sorceress who simply batted the twister aside using her own magic.

Harry was impressed with the level of power both combatants were showing and he knew he wasn't nearly at that level yet. His attention was drawn away from the battle by Seth.

“I'm ready for the knowledge transfer.” He said “Brace yourself.”

Harry would have screamed had he not been under a stop spell. His head felt like it was being whacked with a sledge hammer over and over again. In spite of this though he still saw the battle. Vadne had retaliated with another succession of Flare Spells which Antym nimbly dodged before lunging at the sorceress and slashing across her chest. The blow should have been lethal, but the sorceress only suffered a minor flesh wound. Since her quarry was close she unleashed a bolt of pure magic which struck the young warrior in the chest and sent him staggering backwards breathing heavily.

"I underestimated you." He said while panting

"That you did." She said while casting a Cura spell on herself. "And now it will cost you your life."

She raised both hands and a massive amount of magic surged through the air. In spite of the pain in his head Harry was able to recognize what spell was about to be cast and he hoped he was far enough away to not be effected by it. Apparently Antym knew what was about to happen as well because a look of pure fear momentarily crossed his face before Vadne uttered one word. "ULTIMA!" A massive amount of energy crackled through the air creating a green aura around everything. Vadne disappeared, but Antym didn't. There was an explosion of magical energy right on top of the former SeeD and he screamed in pain as explosion after explosion hit around him. Next there was one final blast of magic which had a radius of at least thirty yards.

Vadne reappeared where she'd been standing and was panting heavily from the amount of magic she'd poured into the spell. As the smoke cleared Antym could be seen lying on the ground in a crater. Smoke was rising from his body and he'd clearly seen better days. His black body suit and cloak were torn to shreds and he was burned badly all over. As bad as he looked though he was still alive. Harry was shocked when he saw him get on his feet, but he couldn't revel in his shock as the pain in his head suddenly reached a crescendo.

"You are very resilient boy." Said Vadne bemusedly "A shame your talents are wasted on such a pathetic sorceress."

Ire flashed in the knight's eyes at this comment and a golden aura surrounded him. He raised his gunblade and charged forward at blinding speed. Vadne didn't have any strength left to defend herself and the gunblade impaled her cleanly. The knight wasn't done though. He wrenched the blade free pulling the trigger and causing a localized explosion which literally blew the sorceress apart. Not one to have any qualms about overkill he sent a Flare spell after the sorceress effectively getting rid of any chance of revival.

By this point the knowledge transfer was over and with Vadne's death Harry was freed from the Stop spell. He felt extremely angry after seeing the brutal way Antym killed the sorceress and something in him snapped. He felt himself change from the wolf form and back into his normal self. He wasted no time and summoned the gunblade from the inside of the cave. He caught it neatly and twirled it around his hand experimentally. His knowledge Seth had given him was now ingrained in his brain and he intended to put it to good use. Antym uncorked an Elixir and downed it in one gulp. He almost didn't notice the enraged wizard coming toward him, but at the last second he brought his gunblade up to block the opposing slash coming from Harry.

"I don't know who you are, but you picked the wrong person to pick a fight with." Snarled Antym as he lashed out at Harry with his gunblade. The wizard parried each blow and feinted a blow to the left which the Knight fell for. With the other hand he fired a Reducto which hit Antym and sent him flying. He landed in a heap about a hundred yards away.

"You killed her!" Harry roared "You didn't have to do that! She was old and was going to die soon anyway and you just blew her apart without blinking an eye!"

Antym climbed to his feet and looked at Harry. His eyes widened slightly before turning back to their cold state. He let out a humorless laugh before saying. "I see that the missing Offworlder has been found. I was going to kill you, but now I'll have to bring you in alive."

"You'll try." Said Harry charging forward once again. He didn't make it too far though because Antym had rushed forward at a speed Harry

couldn't believe and had hit him with a shoulder block effectively winding him and sending him rolling several feet. The ex-SeeD was on him once again and kicked him viciously in the ribs. Harry felt them break and bit down a cry of pain. He raised his hand and shot a Flare spell at the unsuspecting warrior. Antym was caught off guard and the spell hit him full force. Once again, thanks to his impressive magical defense, the spell only did superficial damage. It did however give Harry the opportunity to regain his footing and heal himself. Harry felt his limit break drawing near and knew that he only had to survive a few more minutes before he could unleash some serious power. In the meantime he tapped into his magic and pushed himself harder than he had ever done while training and in the blink of an eye he was upon the Knight slashing viciously with his gunblade while timing the trigger pulls expertly.

Antym was caught surprised once again and was doing all he could to block the attacks. Harry managed to slash him viciously across the face leaving a mark from his left temple down to his right jaw bone. This enraged the Knight and he countered with a slash that tore across Harry's right pectoral and went to his left shoulder. Both combatants backed away from each other and cast healing spells. The spells healed the wounds, but they didn't take away the scars.

"You're good Offworlder, but it isn't enough." Said Antym

"I'm just getting started." Said Harry now feeling his Limit Break come full force. He let the energy flow and it came around him in waves of electric blue. His gunblade turned completely black and suddenly he felt himself go into a trance "Ranzokuken!" He yelled before charging forward once again. He came at Antym like a man possessed and in essence he was. He slashed any part of the Knight's body he could reach, but Antym had been ready and blocked all but a few glancing blows. Harry leapt away from him and raised his blade "Avatar of Oblivion!" He cried leaping forward once again. This time his blade was seeping with power and when Antym tried to block the attack his blade was split in two. Harry slashed him across the chest with his attack and the excess energy sent the Knight flying once again.

When the attack was over Harry felt exhaustion take over his body. His shoulders slumped and he started panting heavily. He didn't even

see the black blur heading towards him before it was too late. Antym had reached his own Limit Break and had attacked Harry with a Ranzokuken of his own. Harry made a valiant attempt to block the slashes and he did manage to avoid any lethal damage, however he was far from uninjured. He suffered a blow to his right arm that almost took it clean off and another to the back that had it been a few inches to the left would've paralyzed him for life. Antym backed off and blue energy pulsed over his body. He raised his blade and said two words before charging forward "Lion Heart!" Before the Knight could get close enough to inflict any damage with the attack he was hit with a red bolt of energy and was sent to the ground.

"That's two life debts now boy." Harry heard Grindlewald say from behind him. He then felt a wave of healing envelope his body and his wounds were healed, although they still left scars.

"I didn't ask you to save me." Said Harry bitterly

"Still I did." Said Grindlewald "I expected more from you boy. You should have been able to defeat him with no problems."

"How am I supposed to do that when you don't actually TEACH me anything?" Yelled Harry "For the past year all you've done is throw me headfirst into one battle after another and watched me stumble through it barely winning by the skin of my teeth. You even fought me so you could get some kind of sick pleasure out of torturing me. And now you sit here and say I should have been able to win when you didn't do anything to prepare me for a battle short of throwing me into them!"

Grindlewald simply looked at Harry before bursting out laughing. "I was wondering how long it would take before you said something like that." He chuckled again "Very well I will start teaching you, but you were wrong I did teach you how to use your magic and I told you how to combine it. I also put you in situations where I knew you would have to use skills you already had and hone new ones. You have improved a great deal since we first started although there is still much to be desired."

"How long have you been there watching." Spat Harry

“Since the beginning.” Said Grindlewald “You did achieve one of your Animagus forms, which was why I brought you here in the first place, running into Vadne was unexpected, but not unwelcome and the Knight over there did provide a good training exercise.”

“You watched it all.” Harry said quietly with his head hung “You watched it all and didn’t even lift a finger to help her.”

“She died the way she wanted to.” Said Grindlewald “In battle. Vadne was a warrior through and through ever since I’ve known her. She lived for a good fight and died valiantly in combat.”

“That’s not an excuse!” Yelled Harry looking up with his eyes blazing “It wasn’t right. There was no way she could win and she knew it! And you just stood there watching it all!”

“She said so herself that sometimes you have to fight battles when you know you’ll loose.” Said Grindlewald “Being a warrior means you’ll try anyway if its no more then to give someone time to escape, or in her case giving you enough time to return to human form. Don’t try to lecture me on right and wrong boy, it is relative. There is no such thing as good and evil there is only power and those with the will to use it versus those who succumb to it.”

His words rang a bell in Harry’s head and the voice of Tom Riddle echoed through his mind “There is no such thing as good and evil only those with power and those to weak to take it.” Harry lunged at the former Dark Lord who simply batted him aside like an annoying fly.

“You want to kill me boy?” He asked not waiting for a response “That’s fine, it will give you something to work for, but when the time comes you had better not hold back or you will die.”

“I will kill you Grindlewald.” Said Harry “You caused the deaths of millions back in our world and you’re just as heartless now as you were then.”

"If Dumbledore couldn't do it what makes you think you can?" Asked the dark wizard

"I'm not Dumbledore." Said Harry "And I will do it."

"Fine we'll make a wizard's pact." Said Grindlewald "You shall train with me until you are able to defeat me in a battle to the death, you will also take on an apprentice and teach them all you know about magic before you die. Do you swear this?"

"I swear." Said Harry without any hesitation. He hadn't planned on teaching anyone magic, but he didn't care he'd kill the murdering bastard who called himself a teacher if it was the last thing he did. There was a rush of magic and the sound of a lock clinking which symbolized the forming of the pact and Harry felt something tighten around his chest momentarily.

"Good." Said Grindlewald "Now apparate back to the desert so we can continue your training. With that he disappeared leaving Harry alone with the still unconscious Antym. Harry looked at the knight and briefly contemplated killing him right there, but something inside him wouldn't allow him to kill a man that was totally defenseless no matter how much of a bastard he thought the man was.

Harry wondered why he hadn't tried to apparate before and realized that he hadn't even thought about it. He was so used to not being able to do it that the notion had completely slipped his mind. He took a deep breath and pictured the desert. He thought about trying to apparate back to Lucca, but dismissed it immediately since he had no idea if his friends were still there. He focused on his destination and disappeared with a small 'pop'.

Shortly after Harry disappeared Antym started to stir. He slowly sat up and looked around. He was alone and there was no trace of the Offworlder anywhere save the tracks he'd made in the snow while fighting. Antym took out a crystal from around his neck and looked at it. It was now a deep blue signaling that the sorceress' power had been absorbed. Something was off though; it wasn't as bright as it should be. He then remembered the necklace that the Offworlder was wearing and realized what had happened.

"I don't know how you got away this time." He said to the air "But I will find you and finish this fight."

Antym raised his hand to check his wrist communicator. It connected to his Skyve. He pressed a few buttons and the ship came into view overhead. He jumped into the air and landed in the cockpit. Now he had to go back to Baron and tell Mia the bad news. She'd be sure to punish him for that and he wasn't looking forward to it. He resolved to make the Offworlder suffer ten times worse whatever he had to go through.

As Antym flew off a figure dressed in all black with a white flowing cape and long silver hair stood atop a cliff which overlooked the battlefield. He smiled to himself thinking of the fun he could have by toying with the offworlder and the knight.

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Harry reappeared at the riverbank near the cave where he'd awoken so many months ago. He looked around and Grindlewald was leaning against one of the palm trees on the bank. He tossed Harry something and the wizard caught it. It was a sheath.

"If you insist on using that thing you need to properly store it." Said the older wizard

Harry simply glared at him before fastening the sheath to his belt. He didn't need his cloak anymore so he threw it off of him leaving his shoulders bare. He cast a Repairo charm on his pants to fix the damage done during the fight and then looked at Grindlewald expectantly.

"Turn back into a wolf." He ordered

Harry focused on his wolf form and how it felt to change. Slowly and painfully he shifted into the white canine.

"So you can be taught." Said the wizard scathingly "Now change back."

Harry did so and this repeated for another twenty times until Harry was fast enough with the change to do it almost instantly.

“Now we work on the panther form.” Said Grindlewald “I suppose you want pointers?”

“You’re supposed to be teaching me.” Said Harry bitinglly “If you can call it that.”

“Focus on the panther and then let your magic take over.” Said Grindlewald “You know how to become a wolf, turning into the panther will feel similar.”

Harry tried it looking within himself to the panther. He felt something stir and felt fur sprout all over his body. The process was agonizingly slow, but he didn’t stop. He was determined to master this and wipe the smug expression right off Grindlewald’s face. Slowly but surely he managed the change and found himself in his panther form. The form felt instantly natural and he took a few experimental steps before running around the desert full speed.

Of course Grindlewald couldn’t stand to see him get any sort of amusement. He sent a series of Firaga spells and bone breaking hexes at the black panther. Harry dodged most of them, but he took a bone breaker to the left shoulder and a Firaga to the face. He cast a Curaga on himself and started the process of changing back. In mid change he had to dodge another Firaga which disrupted his concentration.

“What the hell?” He yelled. It sounded slurred coming from his misshapen mouth and he winced in pain from the process of talking.

“Do you think your enemies will give you a chance to transform if you do it that slowly?” With that he started launching more spells at Harry who was hard pressed to dodge them since he was stuck in between being on four legs and two. He managed it though and slowly got back into his human form. He was fed up with dodging spells and retaliated by firing off a succession of Blizzaga blasts at the dark

wizard. Grindlewald smirked at him and the volley of spells continued back and forth.

“Well boy what are you waiting for?” Yelled Grindlewald while throwing spells at Harry “Practice that form!”

Harry looked at the wizard as if he had a second head. He realized that Grindlewald was serious and started to change again while keeping an eye on the wizard. He managed it this time without being hit by the spell. Once in panther form he had to dodge the spells that came at an even faster rate. Next he started to change back into a human and managed it quicker this time. This process went on with Harry taking a few more hits from various spells, but managing to switch forms faster each time.

“Enough boy!” Said Grindlewald “Now we work on your snake form.”

Harry was tired by this time, but he didn't dare show that weakness to Grindlewald. He didn't bother to ask how to do it this time. He focused on the last of his forms and slowly felt the change taking hold. Thankfully Grindlewald didn't attack him this time and he managed to complete the agonizing process of becoming a black cobra. This transformation was the most painful by far. Melding one's limbs together wasn't the most comfortable process. He focused on becoming a human once again and repeated the process until the change went smoothly. He did have to do some spell dodging whenever he was in his snake form all the while hearing Grindlewald taunt him by saying “Constant Vigilance!” Harry figured he'd either known Moody before he 'died' or he scoured the information from Harry's head.

Over the next few months Harry had to stay in a certain form and use it as his normal form each week. This got him used to each form. He worked on changing from one form to another without going into his human form, which was extremely difficult. All the while he was in an almost constant duel with Grindlewald trading and dodging spells. When he was allowed to rest he took the opportunity to study the books on spells and potions. Grindlewald had given him a book on potions ingredients which showed the substitutes for things found on Earth and things available on Temprus. Harry studied that book

diligently because he wanted to make some of the things in the book Fred and George had given him.

The next month Harry spent improving his dueling skills and it was once such day that his training came to an abrupt end.

“Well boy we’re going all out today.” Said Grindlewald “You’ve been training for a year and a half now and I think you’re ready for this.” After that Grindlewald said no more and launched an assault of spells at Harry. There were bone remover hexes, Blizzaga Spells, Stunners, Reductor Curses and even a Killing Curse or two. Harry fired back with his own hexes using one hand and with the other he did a summoning charm on the wizard’s robes. He knew he wouldn’t be able to summon a vital organ as Grindlewald was a very powerful wizard and such a tactic wouldn’t effect him. The robe started to pull toward Harry causing Grindlewald to falter. Harry capitalized by firing a bone removing hex that caught Grindlewald in the left hand. The older wizard winced in pain before banishing his robe to reveal a black body suit that showed he was well muscled despite his age.

Grindlewald brought both hands together and shot a massive lightning ball at Harry. The younger wizard didn’t manage to dodge the whole thing and it caught him in his right side. Grindlewald capitalized by levitating into the air. This irritated Harry because he was unable to levitate himself in the same way. Using his height advantage the older wizard used a meteor spell to shoot single meteors at Harry. The wizard dodged them quickly but the pace was slowly picking up. It got to the point where Harry was totally on the defensive, being unable to mount an offense due to the constant dodging.

This continued for another hour before Harry finally saw an opening. He realized that he had approximately two seconds of a lapse after every ten meteors in which Grindlewald used to regain his focus and recast the spell. When the ninth meteor of the next series came at him Harry dodged the massive rock and got Grindlewald in his sights. After the next meteor was unleashed Harry fired off a killing curse. The beam hit its mark and Grindlewald fell out of the sky and onto the sand below. Harry didn’t get a chance to enjoy his victory though,

because the next thing he knew Grindlewald was off the ground and firing killing curses of his own.

“How the hell did he survive that?” Harry thought astonished.

“He cast an Auto-Life spell before he started floating.” Said Seth
“Didn’t you see the halo above his head?”

“No.” Answered Harry as he dodged another lethal spell.

Harry was familiar with the spell, but he had yet to successfully cast it. Grindlewald had told him not to worry about it since it took years to master and that he, Harry, was too inept in the ways of magic to cast a normal life spell. This had only served to inspire Harry to prove him wrong, but he had yet to do so.

“I didn’t know you had it in you boy!” Said Grindlewald “That caught me off guard, but it won’t happen again!”

He waved his right hand over his left and the bones that had been removed in it returned. Next he crossed his fingers over each other and slammed his hands into the ground. The ground trembled violently and a crack appeared in front of his hands and headed straight for Harry. As it got closer the crack branched out covering a large area which Harry was unable to dodge. He compensated for this by casting a float spell on himself and hovering above the trembling ground. Hoping to take advantage of Grindlewald’s preoccupied state Harry used his magic to combine a Flare spell with a Haste spell. “Quick Burn!” He yelled. A huge ball of heat streamed toward Grindlewald who dodged it, but the attack followed him. He tried to deflect the spell, but it didn’t work. Instead of deflecting the spell he caused it to grow bigger and it slammed into him covering his whole body.

Harry poured as much magic as he could into the spell, but Grindlewald was still resisting. With a roar of defiance the older wizard sent the spell hurling into the sky where it exploded harmlessly.

“Impressive boy, but I’m afraid it isn’t enough.” Taunted the wizard “If you give up now I’ll let you continue your training until you’re ready to present a challenge.”

“Shove it.” Said Harry unsheathing his gunblade and rushing the other wizard.

“Stupid Gryffindor.” Said Grindlewald while firing an explosion curse at Harry. Grindlewald then realized that Harry was still under the influence of his Float spell and smirked. He unleashed a Tornado and laughed out loud when Harry attempted to brace himself with ground that wasn’t there. “Stupid boy, you’re still under your float spell.” The whirlwind sucked the younger wizard up before he could reverse the float spell. Grindlewald wasn’t holding anything back and conjured spiked ice balls and hurled them into the Tornado. He sighed knowing that there was no way the boy would survive this. It turned out he was wrong.

After about five minutes the Tornado should have dissipated, instead it started to move on its own accord and was heading straight for him. He braced himself on the ground preparing to counter the tornado with his own magic and wondering how the boy had managed to reverse the spell. He was surprised when he felt something stab him from behind and protrude through his stomach. He looked down and didn’t see anything for a moment other than a hole in his abdomen that was gushing blood. Then a blade materialized and he then realized what had happened. When he cast the spell at Harry the boy had allowed himself to get caught in the whirlwind, but he then apparated behind Grindlewald, turned invisible and manipulated the Tornado to distract the older wizard.

Harry wrenched the blade out of Grindlewald’s back and pulled the trigger to maximize the effect. The results were very satisfying as half of the other wizard’s body was blown apart.

Grindlewald fell to the ground with unfocused eyes and looked up at Harry. The younger wizard’s eyes were blazing with green fire. He didn’t say anything just looked down at Grindlewald.

"Well boy... cough ...you've completed your training." He hacked out "I didn't expect to loose, but that's what I get for underestimating you... cough, cough ...I've only got one more thing to say though. Dark Flare!" Grindlewald's body disappeared and the sky suddenly turned black. Rain began to pour down in torrents and the ground began to shake violently.

"What the hell is going on?" Yelled Harry

"Move!" Said Seth urgently

Harry needed no more prompting as he apparated from where he'd been and reappeared a hundred yards away. He was glad he'd done this when a massive amount of dark energy blasted where he'd been standing. Harry looked up to see a huge black dragon hovering in the air directly above where the center of the blast was.

"Tiamat!" Said Seth "Summon me now!"

"Don't have to tell me twice." Said Harry "Desert Fury!"

Harry disappeared from the physical plane and Seth took his place. The guardian no longer held a Scythe but a huge black gunblade. He jumped into the air and headed straight toward Tiamat. The dragon snorted when it saw Seth and slashed at him with a claw. Seth blocked it with his gunblade and countered with a slash of his own. Tiamat blocked it and kicked the serpent warrior in the stomach. Seth went crashing to the ground and Tiamat hovered over him opening its jaws wide and preparing to unleash another Dark Flare attack. Seth didn't wait to get hit with the attack; he leapt back into the air and brought his gunblade crashing into the dragon's neck causing the attack to backfire sending Tiamat crashing to the ground dazed. Seth landed and rushed toward the dragon slashing across its right wing effectively grounding it.

Tiamat unleashed a wave of energy from its mouth which caught Seth off guard sending the guardian flying. Tiamat couldn't fly, but it could still use its remaining wing to glide a little ways off the ground. It rushed after Seth with a malicious gleam in its violet eyes. It slashed ruthlessly at Seth's armor tearing it to shreds. Seth attempted to

overpower the dragon, but it was no use. Tiamat held the serpent down and gathered energy in its jaws prepared to deliver a final strike. Seth gripped his gunblade tightly and once again tried to force the dragon off of him.

“What’s the matter Almasy?” A jeering voice said in his head “Can’t overpower me? You’re just as pathetic a guardian as you were a human. I’m glad I get to be the one to finally end your miserable existence.”

Seth grunted and pushed with all his might against the dragon which slowly started to yield. Just when he thought he was about to overpower Tiamat the dragon pushed back even harder slamming him back onto the ground.

“Pathetic weakling.” Taunted Tiamat “Unfortunately I’ll have to kill your junctioner for you to die, but it won’t take long once you’re out of the way.”

With that Tiamat unleashed the attack at point blank range sending Seth back to the guardian plane until he could recuperate enough to appear in Harry’s mind again.

Harry appeared where he’d summoned Seth and felt something missing in his mind. He’d seen the battle between the dragon and Seth, but he hadn’t heard a word of the conversation. He felt a throbbing in his head and he was also a little light headed. Still he gripped his gunblade tightly and prepared to fight Tiamat. He focused on the dragon and saw that it had some very powerful spells at its disposal. One such spell was the Aura spell. He drew the spell out and cast it on himself as the dragon charged at him. Harry felt his energy surge through him and raised his hand to the oncoming dragon. “Meltdown!” He yelled. An orange blast of intense heat hit the dragon turning its armor-like scales into little more than paper coating. Harry then focused his energy and charged forward.

The gunblade glowed blue as he ran forward and started the Ranzokuken. Tiamat was tired from its battle with Seth and wasn’t able to block the strikes. Harry timed his trigger pulls expertly and caused serious damage to the dragon’s body. When the Ranzokuken

was finished Harry threw the gunblade right at Tiamat's head. It lodged itself in the skull and Harry channeled his remaining energy into one spell.

"Lightning Rod!" He yelled thrusting his hands forward.

The glowing blade suddenly got even brighter and the overhanging clouds burst open letting a gigantic surge of lightning hammer straight into the gunblade and course through the dragon's already damaged body. When the attack was over Tiamat crashed to the ground where its now ashen body disintegrated upon contact.

Harry collapsed to the ground exhausted and let his eyes fall closed.

"Boy if you're hearing this you somehow managed to beat me and my GF." He heard Grindlewald's voice say. "When you wake up, because you're no doubt about to pass out, You can find your materia in the cave. It was there the whole time in the corner under a disillusionment charm. I know you wanted to find a way home, but I'll say again that there isn't one. If you don't believe me head for the lafa Tree, you'll find answers there. Now I'm off to the afterlife, probably hell, I'd tell you that I was proud of you boy, but we both know that's a lie. I hope you fail in your endeavors and suffer a horrible and painful death, goodbye."

Harry chuckled to himself at the message before finally passing out from exhaustion. No fiends would dare come near the area for some time due to the amount of magic which had been unleashed in the air, so for the moment he was safe and he could finally rest.

A/N: I'd like to say that the review count for the last couple chapters has been great. I hope that it continues to be that way. That's it for this chpater. I'll post the next one Sunday or Monday, depending on how I feel. See the little box that says submit review? CLICK IT:)

War in the Woods

It was a clear day in Macalania Forest. The birds were singing, the fiends were roaming and Andrea and Ethan were arguing once again.

"I'm telling you we're lost." Said Ethan

"We are not lost." Said Andrea "We just don't know where we are."

"So we're lost." Said Ethan

"We know where we're going; we just have to keep heading north."
Said Andrea

"We've been heading north for the past two months!" Yelled Ethan
"This damn forest is endless!"

"Yell a little louder I don't think they heard you in New Zanerkand."
Said Andrea sarcastically.

"Look I'm sick of this." Said Ethan "It didn't take us nearly as long to get to Luca, just two months, we stayed there for one, it got bombed, we escaped with our stuff and Harry's trunk, and now we've been walking around for the past YEAR!"

"It isn't my fault they had blockades on the major roads." Said Andrea
"We couldn't take any of the major roads, so we had to trek through the wilderness. We couldn't just romp straight through fiend territory like that, it would be suicide. You know this, so why do you keep whining!"

"Sorry." Said Ethan "I'm just frustrated. I've never been out in the field this long before, and I need a shower, plus we haven't had a decent meal in weeks and I swear there's this rock in my boot that just won't come out."

"You think you've got it bad?" Asked Andrea "I've got blisters on both feet, I've had the same crick in my neck for the past four months from sleeping on the ground, I've been slashed in the same spot on my shoulder so many times that its tender even after a Curaga and to top

it all off its that time of month, so if you value your life I'd stop complaining about where we are and where we're going."

"Okay, okay." Said Ethan putting his hands up in defense "That was a bit too much info though."

"You asked for it." Grumbled Andrea "Now we need to find Bastian's base, if it's still around here."

"I swear that tree looks familiar." Said Ethan

"What did I just say?" Asked Andrea exasperatedly

"I didn't mean it like that." Protested Ethan "I mean it looks familiar like we're getting close."

"Now that you mention it, this area does look familiar." Said Andrea looking around more thoroughly. "There are even some tree stumps from where they cut trees for fire wood."

They continued on until they found the airship sitting on the ground surrounded by the numerous cabins. Upon entering the clearing they were immediately set upon by the many mercenaries and held at weapon point.

"Look here boys we got some Baron filth trying to sneak up on us." Called out one loud individual

"You're mistaken." Said Andrea calmly "We're not from Baron or Strife."

"Sure you're not." Jeered another man

"I say we just kill them and ask questions later." Suggested a woman

"For your own safety I'd suggest you lower your weapons and let us speak to Bastian." Said Andrea

"You know the boss?" Asked the first man

“Don’t any of you recognize us?” Asked Ethan “I know it’s been a while, but Hyne we didn’t come in here swinging weapons or anything.”

“Rigal go get the boss.” Said the first man. Another man ran out of the crowd and headed into the airship “I don’t know who you are, but if you’re lying about knowing the boss we’re going to get to pump you full of led.”

“If you threaten us one more time I’m going to hurt you.” Said Andrea

“I’d listen to her if I were you man.” Said Ethan

“You’ll be dead before you even touch that gunblade.” Said the man “And if you’ve got a gunblade you must be SeeD!” He said the last part accusingly

“And if we are?” Asked Andrea

“Alright I’ve had enough of you.” Said the man cocking his machine gun. The other soldiers followed suite brandishing their swords or cocking their various firearms.

“What’s going on out here!” Yelled an authoritative female voice.

“Madam Sophia these two are trespassing.” Said the soldier with the machine gun.

“Wedge put the gun away.” Said Sophia “Their not our enemies.”

“Told you.” Said Andrea smirking

Wedge glared at her but he and the others lowered their weapons. Andrea and Ethan followed Sophia into the still grounded airship and headed to the troop quarters.

“I’m glad you two survived Luca.” Said Sophia “No one suspected Baron of being this aggressive so soon, I guess the raid on Giran’s base provoked them.”

“Well now they’re occupying every town from Killika to Bevelle.” Said Ethan “You have to have a traveling license to use the main roads and if you’re a SeeD or Strife soldier you’re as good as dead if they catch you.”

“Actually if you have any weapons at all and aren’t a member of a registered fiend hunter’s guild, or one of their soldiers, they have orders to kill on sight.” Said Sophia

“Don’t we know it.” Muttered Andrea “We’ve had to kill our fair share of Black Wings while we were trekking through Spira. Our magic reserves are almost gone now making junctions next to useless.”

“We’ve managed to stay hidden, amazingly.” Said Sophia “Bastian has groups set up to engage anyone who gets close to here. If the soldiers don’t return to their posts the Black Wings just assume the fiends got them.”

“So where were the guards when we just walked into your base?”
Asked Andrea

“That’s a good question.” Said Sophia “Either they were engaging some fiends or...”

“Attention all units.” Sounded Bastian’s voice from overhead “We are under attack, I repeat we are under attack. All medic regroup to the interior, melee units out in front, mages and ranged units fall back behind the melee units, MOVE!”

“Well that answers that question.” Said Andrea “Looks like they found you.”

“Looks that way.” Said Sophia “Let’s go.”

...

Sheyna ducked back into the alley where she and her mother had been holding up for the last few months. The Black Wings had poured into Bevelle like a plague, taking the lives of anyone who opposed them without a second of remorse. Large mechanized guards

stocked the streets. They stood on two legs and had massive arms equipped with laser cannons as well as rotary blades, a soldier sat atop them controlling their every move. Anyone who wasn't a registered citizen of the new empire was either captured or disposed of. She'd been out hunting fiends when the city came under attack. Upon returning she'd found her house completely destroyed. At first she'd assumed the worst about her mother, but after shifting through the rubble she'd found her with only a few serious wounds. One of those wounds however was the complete severing of one leg as well as the removal of part of her right hand. It only took a Curaga or two to heal the rest of her, but the missing parts of her body couldn't be found, so she had to make do without them.

Now the guards were doing their hourly sweep looking for any rebels. She herself had been identified as just that. Her constant raids on the soldiers' supply depots had earned a reputation. The guards that were stationed near them hadn't been a problem at first, but after a while the soldiers got tired of losing their ammo and food supplies, and this led them to up the guard on the depots. Now every time she went out it was a struggle for life and death. The mechanized guards were heavily resistant to magic, even able to withstand a full force Tsunami from Leviathan.

What they couldn't stand though was a well aimed katana slash. It seemed that the Empire had underestimated the close range capabilities of a common civilian. Although she didn't like using the blade she wasn't too shabby with it either. The main power core of the robots was located close to the junction between their legs. Another good tactic for dealing with the machines was to snipe the pilot. This usually required a demolition shell because the shield around the cockpit was impervious to all the other rounds. The problem with demolition rounds though was that they weren't easy to come by in the city at this time.

"Sheyna." Her mother called breaking her musings.

"What is it mom?" Asked the girl without turning around.

"I want you to get out of the city." Her mother said.

Sheyna sighed. They'd had this argument hundreds of times now and it was the same every time. "I'm not leaving you here mom." She said "Please stop trying to make me do that."

"You don't understand Sheyna!" Said her mother coming to stand in front of her. "If they caught you and found out who and what you are, I shudder to think what they'd do."

"I can handle myself fine mom." Sheyna assured her mother.

"I know that, but you're only one person." Said her mother. "The only people in the city resisting are you and a handful of others and that's getting less and less by the day. You need to leave."

"I'll leave if you come with me." Said Sheyna

"I can't do that." Said her mother "I'd only slow you down, and any hope you have of getting out of the city depends on your speed."

"I'm not leaving you, so don't try to make me again." Said Sheyna resolutely

"If they capture you and get into the hidden rooms in Baron Castle I don't think anything will be able to stop them." Said her mother "Your father told me about the rooms, deep under the castle one of the Blades of Power is sealed; only a Lunarian can open the rooms and once inside they can gain the Excalibur."

"Mom that's just a myth." Said Sheyna

"No Sheyna." Said her mother "Those stories that I told you when you were a child weren't just stories. Those things did happen; the evidence is all over the planet. The arches left over from Time Compression, the lafa Tree, the crater at the top of the world as well as the ruins of the Dark City and even the Whale Ship fabled to sail the cosmos, they are all on this planet somewhere. The Blades of Power are real as well. Excalibur, Massamune, the two Ultima Weapons and The Avenger. Having one of those gives the wielder incredible power, but having all of them would give the bearer enough power to retrieve the Key of the Planet."

“Mom I know you believe in all those legends, but besides Time Compression, the rest is a bit too far fetched for me.” Said Sheyna

“How can you say that?” Asked her mother aghast “This is a very serious matter Sheyna. If someone gets a hold of that key do you know what would happen?”

“If I’ve listened to you then yes.” Said Sheyna “The Weapons will return and the world will meet a gruesome end.” She said nonchalantly.

Her mother sighed and used her crutch to head over to the wall of the alley where she slumped down into a sitting position. “Weather you believe me or not isn’t important right now.” Said the woman “If you insist on staying then at least...” She was cut off as a guard turned down the alley and shined its searchlights directly on the two women.

“Shit!” Hissed Sheyna dodging the laser blast that was sent her way, she countered with a Thundaga spell, but it didn’t do anything more than cause the robot to shudder slightly. She unfastened her machine gun from her back and started firing at the guard. As expected the bullets simply pinged off the adamantium armor. When the clip was spent she ejected it and ducked to the side of the guard as he rushed at her, slashing with his rotary blade on the robot’s left arm. Sheyna slammed in a demolition clip and started firing again. Four of the shells hit the mech in the side causing a large crack in the outer armor. Sheyna focused a Thundaga spell into that part of the armor. This time the results were infinitely better. A surge of electricity coursed through the mech immobilizing the right side.

Now the mech was cornered in the back of the alley with Sheyna blocking its escape. The soldier sneered at her from behind the cockpit shield and pressed a button on the control console. The mech’s head opened up and a large canon protruded out from where the mechanical face once resided. Sheyna fired at it, but it seemed the guard had activated some sort of energy shield around the mech causing the shells to bounce off and explode against the walls. Sheyna glanced over at her mother and saw that the older woman had gotten back on her feet and was now behind Sheyna, near the

entrance to the alley. The cannon started to gather energy and Sheyna quickly realized that the blast could obliterate everything in the alley. She cast a hurried Haste Spell, grabbed her mother and ran at top speed out of the alley.

She made it clear of the entryway just as the cannon fired. The blast did indeed reach the walls of the buildings on either side of the alley, disintegrating everything it touched. Unfortunately for the fleeing pair the other guards in the area had been drawn to the battle. They found themselves surrounded by four more mechs. One of them was clearly a ranking officer, it was a little larger than the others and where they were a brownish-grey color these were black with the symbol of a golden wing on the torso.

"You are hereby under arrest for rebellion against the Empire of Baron." Said the voice of the captain through the intercom on the mech. "Surrender or be destroyed." To accent his point he and the other guards started charging their laser cannons and trained them on the two women."

"Sheyna you have to leave." Whispered her mother shifting slightly on her shoulder. "I didn't use this before, because I don't know where it will send you, that and I only have enough power for it to send one person. I had hoped you'd leave and I wouldn't have to use it, but now I don't have a choice."

"What?" Asked Sheyna before her mother dropped off her back and shoved her with her left hand. She was enveloped in a blue aura and she knew what her mother had done. It was a warp spell. The spell was erratic and could send the person using it almost anywhere if they weren't skilled at casting it, which was why her mother hadn't used it before. Before she disappeared, Sheyna saw the guards release the blasts. They converged right on her mother leaving nothing behind.

...

Harry shook his head as he sat up. He had a massive head ache and that feeling of emptiness still hadn't left him. He looked around surveying the destruction left by his battle with Grindlewald. There

was a crater where Tiamat had first launched its Dark Flare attack and another where it had obliterated Seth. There were also several smaller craters where Grindlewald's meteors had struck while trying to hit Harry. The wizard took an experimental step and stumbled slightly. In addition to the headache he felt light headed and dizzy. He knew he needed an Elixir so he made his way toward the cave.

"Seth?" He thought as he was walking. He waited but received no answer. He'd seen the guardian fall, but he thought that GF were immortal unless their junctioner died or they were independent and died in battle. He tried again and again he received no answer. Once he got to the cave he looked around and noticed that things looked a lot different. The walls were no longer rough granite, but smoothed marble. There was also a door set into the wall. Harry decided to look at that later, for the moment he needed to find an Elixir. Shuffling through the scattered books and parchment in the cave he found a vial of blue liquid and gulped it down. He felt instantly better, but the empty feeling in his head was still there as well as his headache. He focused on entering his mental realm and immediately saw the cause of the headache.

They were everywhere. Fiends of all kinds. Belhemoths, Bombs, Antilions, and even to Harry what looked like a T-Rex or two. His defenses were taking care of some of them. They fell into the pits or triggered the explosions. However they still managed to get to the doors where his memories were located. An interesting thing was that whenever they came near the Forms corridor they were attacked by a wolf, panther and snake. The animals cast spells and fought with tooth, fang and claw. Harry didn't stand back and marvel for long. He realized he was holding the Sword of Gryffindor and momentarily wondered about it. That was until he saw a T-Rex break down the door labeled Hogwarts.

He charged forward slashing at the fiends and throwing spells to clear his path. In short order he made it to the door and found the fiend trashing the files. He leapt into the air and brought the sword down onto the beast's skull. It vanished after the lethal blow was struck, leaving Harry to go back out to the main chamber. The animals had started to clear a path through the fiends and their numbers were down considerably. All that remained was another T-Rexaur and

three Belhemoths. The wolf charged at one of the Belhemoths gripping the beast's throat in its jaws. The panther vaulted onto the back of another one and started tearing at its spine with its claws and teeth. The cobra simply stood back and cast Ice spells at the T-Rexaur leaving Harry to deal with the remaining Belhemoth.

The wizard charged forward and decapitated the beast easily with his sword. Harry was glad that these fiends didn't behave the same way they did in the real world. They weren't as strong either. He figured that this was due to his Occlumency shields weakening the effects of the mako spawn before they manifested into his mindscape. It worried him about the damage the T-Rexaur had done and he wondered what memories had been destroyed. The animals finished their charges off and nodded to him before going back into the forms corridor.

Harry headed to the bonds area and saw that Seth's door was still there, except it had a lot more locks on it then it used to. He looked at Voldemort's door and saw that it was still the same. Looking at the life debts wall he saw that the only candles still lit were Tonks, Remus and Ron. Last time Ginny's had also been lit. He knew that she hadn't repaid the debt so the only logical reasoning for her candle to be out was if she were dead. Harry sighed upon coming to this realization. He'd left her so she could be safe, but yet in his absence she still died. Unlike all the other times someone close to him had died, he couldn't find a way to pin the blame on himself.

Had they stayed together she would have most likely died in the catacombs. Had he been in his world he may have been able to prevent it, but it wasn't his fault he was in this world in the first place. Therefore, the only guilt he felt was hurting her and himself for no reason. Hermione had tried to tell him that it didn't matter weather they were together or not. That everyone was in danger from Voldemort and it would be safer if he kept all those he cared for close, but in his infinite wisdom he ignored Hermione, again. He made up his mind not to dwell on the subject. There was nothing he could do about it now; the only thing he wondered was how she'd died. He knew that the old man had taken something from him, one of his forms as well as a part of his essence, which was supposed to

protect her from Voldemort's ritual. If that hadn't worked then what was the purpose of taking those things away from him?

He pulled out of his mind and shook his head to clear it. He looked around at the cave and saw the door once again. He walked up to it and opened it cautiously. Inside was an ornately decorated bed chamber. There was a very comfortable looking king sized four poster bed as well as a large chest of drawers. There was also a loo off to the side that reminded Harry of something you'd find in a five star muggle hotel.

"That bastard!" He yelled out loud "All this time he had a king's chamber while I slept on that sorry excuse for a mattress and the ground."

Harry surveyed the room more thoroughly and saw a black orb sitting on top of the chest of drawers. He walked over to it and picked it up. He dropped it almost instantly. The amount of dark magic he sensed within it was almost overwhelming. He remembered Grindlewald telling him that there were two spells within it now. Neither spell was Ultima. The older wizard had called them Apocalypse and Doomsday. Apparently those spells were even more powerful than Ultima. He'd seen Ultima twice and he couldn't imagine something more powerful than that.

"Now what?" He wondered aloud. Grindlewald had said to head for the Iafa Tree if he wanted answers. However the wizard hadn't told him where that was. Nothing in his conversations with Sheyna and the others had mentioned the place. He resigned himself to apparate back to Lucca since it was the last place he'd seen his friends. Before that though he needed to figure out what happened to Seth. He looked around the room once again. He noticed some vials sitting near the materia and examined them. One was labeled G-X-Potion two more were labeled G-Returner. Something about them was nagging at him. He took a leap of faith and gulped down the G-Returner. The empty feeling in his head ebbed away and he suddenly heard the tired voice of Seth.

“Remind me never to take a Dark Flare to the face again.” Groaned the guardian “I hate the Aeon plane. Everyone there is a pompous ass.”

“So that’s where you go when you die?” Asked Harry

“Well I didn’t die.” Said Seth “That can only happen if I’m not junctioned or if you die. Good job beating Tiamat by the way. Good thing you found the G-Returner too, otherwise it would have taken another week for me to come back on my own.”

“Well I’m glad your back.” Said Harry “My head felt empty after Tiamat killed you.”

“That’s because our compatibility is high.” Explained Seth “If it was low then you would have felt a lot better with me gone. Do you mind drinking that X-Potion?”

Harry drank the potion and Seth let out a sigh of pleasure as his energy returned.

“Do you know where the Iafa Tree is Seth?” Asked Harry

“I know it’s in the north.” Said Seth “That’s about all I can tell you.”

“It’s a start.” Said Harry

Harry looked at the materia again. He briefly considered leaving it where it was, but he decided against it because anyone could stumble upon this place and in the wrong hands, that materia could very well live up to its spells’ name. Harry transfigured his pants into a pair of jeans and repaired his worm boots. Next he took a pillow off the bed and turned it into a comfortable black t-shirt. He looked at his hands and noticed the many calluses which adorned them. He ripped part of the bedspread off and changed it into two fingerless black gloves. This way he could grip his gunblade better and his sword as well, if he ever found it. He decided to take the books with him too. Although he had studied them thoroughly, the material within would be very valuable. Transfiguring a simple backpack from some more of the bed spread, He went into the other room and shrunk the books

down before putting them in the bag. Taking a deep breath he made sure the bag was securely on his shoulders, before disappearing with a small 'pop' heading back to the outskirts of Lucca.

...

As the blue aura faded, Sheyna found herself standing in a forest. It didn't look like Macalania, so she had no idea where she was. This wasn't her main concern at the moment however. She kept replaying the events of the last few hours over and over again. Her mother was dead and it was all her fault. If she'd left the first time her mother had asked her, then her mother could have used the spell to get out on her own. Guilt slowly turned to anger. She felt anger at the soldiers for invading Bevelle, anger at her mother for not telling her about the spell sooner and anger at herself, for her inability to protect her mother.

She heard a small 'pop' behind her followed by some rustling in the foliage. She whirled around and saw a figure coming out of the bushes. Not wanting to take any chances she fired at what she assumed to be a Baron soldier. She was surprised when her bullets bounced off a protect spell. A figure about six feet tall came out of the foliage. He had long black hair which came past his shoulders and he carried a gunblade. The hair obscured his face so she couldn't get a good look at it.

"Easy I come in peace." Said the man raising his hands in a submissive gesture

"That's what they all say." Said Sheyna starting to get hysterical "You say you come in peace then you start killing everything." She pointed her gun at him once again and took aim.

"Wait...Sheyna?" Asked the man

"You don't know me!" Yelled Sheyna firing once again.

"Holly shit!" Yelled the man taking cover from the hot led. When he heard that her clip was spent he tried to reason with her again. "Sheyna it's me Harry, I'm not trying to hurt you."

“Harry’s dead!” Yelled Sheyna firing in his direction once again. “Harry’s dead, mom’s dead, dad’s dead, everyone is dead!” She slammed a demolition clip into the gun and fired once again. Once again her shells bounced off of a barrier.

“Expeliormus!” Yelled Harry thrusting his hand in her direction, she dodged the spell and fired at him again. He dodged once again and Sheyna was starting to get angry.

“Meteor Shot!” She said raising her gun to point into the air while pouring her own magic into the weapon. Hundreds of flaming rocks came raining down around her. However, she still couldn’t hit her target. Harry was used to dodging meteors, so this wasn’t much of a problem for him.

Harry once again tried to disarm her, and this time he succeeded. The gun was wrenched out of her hands and landed several meters away from her. She let out a cry and withdrew her katana charging at Harry with surprising speed. Harry blocked her thrusts with his gunblade remaining on the defensive. He didn’t want to hurt her and was trying to figure out how to subdue her without doing so. If he fired a stunner he could send her system into shock since she was obviously hysterical. Therefore he had to try a Sleep spell. He parried another of her thrusts and shot his left hand forward casting the spell on her. It caught her off guard and her eyelids began to droop.

“You...won’t...get me...so...” She mumbled as she dropped her katana and began to fall toward the ground. Harry caught her before she hit and looked her over. She’d obviously been through some trials of her own. Her face and arms were covered in faint scars left from Cure Spells. She had a particularly vicious looking scar on her left shoulder blade which he could see thanks to the fact that she was only wearing a white tank top. He sheathed his gunblade and went laid Sheyna on the ground. He gathered up her katana and machine gun, fastening them onto his back using her sheath. He picked her up and looked for a place to set up camp. Once she awakened they’d have a lot to talk about, if she wasn’t still trying to kill him anyway.

...

Andrea and Ethan rushed out of the airship to help the melee fighters on the front line. Upon exiting they saw that the base was completely surrounded by hundreds of soldiers. There were a few dozen mechs supporting the ground troops as well. Many of the soldiers held Mage Lances and were launching spells at the mercenaries or using them in the traditional way, parrying blows and striking back with the magically charged prongs. Other soldiers had machine guns and were using them to cut down the ranks of the opposition. The cottages had been turned into makeshift bunkers. Several guns were pointed out of the windows firing at the incoming soldiers without discrimination.

Andrea quickly cast a Protect and Shell spell on herself and Ethan followed suit. They rushed into battle splitting up to aid separate groups of warriors. Andrea's gunblade let off a loud bang as she pulled the trigger slashing through the opposition. The mage lances weren't nearly as effective for close range combat as a gunblade or sword. This gave Chaos Flame a slight advantage, but the Black Wings made up for their weakness with the mechs. The machines' lasers cut through the rebels like a hot knife through butter. The few mercenaries that did manage to get close to the mechs were hacked to pieces by the rotary blades on the mechs' arms.

Andrea weaved her way through the incoming soldiers and snuck up on a mech. It was busy firing at one of the bunkers and had its back to her. She jumped into the air and brought her gunblade down with all the force she could muster, pulling the trigger just before impact. She split the armor all the way down and sliced the fuel tank as well. Before the soldier inside could react, the SeeD had leapt backwards and fired a Firaga at the fuel tank. An explosion rocked the battlefield causing a majority of the Black Wings to look in the direction of the fallen mech. Andrea hurriedly ducked an incoming volley of spells and gunfire from the soldiers.

Meanwhile on the other side of the battlefield Ethan was right in the thick of things. He was in a five on one battle with soldiers armed with Mage Lances. His bow swished through the air blocking the thrusts and jabs from the soldiers with expert precision. He used the soldiers own maneuvers against them, causing them to hit each other with

their weapons. He rapped one soundly on the head, splitting his skull and swung his bow in an arch tripping the other four. He quickly cast a Quake spell while they were on the ground. The fractured earth swallowed the soldiers before slamming back together and crushing them. Ethan barely ducked a swipe from one of the mechs rotary blades, only to get grazed by a laser shot from another one. The laser tore a good inch of tissue from his right side and left some of the bone visible. He hissed in pain, but didn't let it get to him. Casting a Cura spell he turned to face the two mechs. One was charging another laser attack and the others' blades were whirring threateningly. Without hesitation Ethan thrust both hands forward and called out "Tornado Zone!"

The form of Pandamona materialized while Ethan disappeared. The GF opened its large bag and began to suck in air. One of the mechs fired its laser just as the bag reached its bursting point. The humongous whirlwind sent the laser ricocheting into another mech and struck it right in the fuel tank. The tornado lifted the two mechs which had been attacking Ethan up and sucked them into the funnel of death. The rotary blades of each robot slashed against the each other's hulls tearing the armor to shreds. When the attack was finished the mechs hit the ground hard. Their fuel tanks were exposed and their power cores were also ruptured. Seconds later they exploded in a shower of debris killing all the soldiers nearby. Ethan reappeared and smirked at the damage he'd caused. He saw another explosion in the distance and knew it was Andrea. Quickly surveying the battle he saw, that despite their best efforts, Chaos Flame was still loosing badly. It would take a miracle to win this battle, but he was determined to fight until his very last breath.

...

Sheyna slowly returned to the waking world. She felt herself lying on something soft and amazingly comfortable. Groggily she rubbed her eyes before opening them. She was still in the woods and she was in some kind of sleeping bag. Looking around, she saw her gun and katana leaning against a tree about twenty feet away from her. Slowly the events of the past few hours came rushing back to her. She'd fought a mech in Bevelle. Then she and her mother had been surrounded by four mechs. Then there was the warp spell, followed

by her mother dying. Then she'd found herself in the same forest where she was now. After that everything was a blur. She remembered fighting something, or was it someone? She'd screamed at whatever she'd been fighting. No matter how hard she tried, she just couldn't piece the last few events together.

"So you're awake now?" Asked a voice from behind her, she pushed herself off the ground and out of the sleeping bag. She then came face to face with who she recognized now as the man she'd fought with.

"Who are you?" She asked cautiously

"You don't recognize me?" Asked Harry "I'm hurt Sheyna, really. You'd think after everything we've been through the least I'd get is a 'Hi Harry nice to see you.' But I guess that's too much to ask."

"Harry?" She asked hesitantly. Despite what Andrea had said, she'd started to believe that Harry was indeed dead. Harry shook the hair out of his face allowing her to get a good look at him. He looked quite a bit older than he used to. A good amount of fuzz adorned his chin and his eyes, which always made him seem older, now held even more sorrow behind them. His hair was a lot longer and didn't seem to stick up as much. She attributed this to it being weighed down by its substantial length. What truly gave his identity away though was the lightning bolt scar just above his right eye. "It is you." She said softly slumping back down on the sleeping bag.

They stood there in silence for a minute until Sheyna's head suddenly snapped up and she glared at him with vexation clear in her eyes.

"Where the hell have you been?" She all but shouted "It's been over a year! I thought you were dead! What the hell have you been doing all this time? Why'd you wait so long to come back?"

"One question at a time." Said Harry "I was in a coma for three months after the incident in Giran's mansion. After that the wizard I told you about forced me to 'train' with him. I was stuck on a desert island with only him, fiends and a psychopath chocobo for company."

“What am I chocobo droppings?” Asked Seth indignantly

“Not now.” Harry chided mentally “He made me fight fiends without any junctions or materia or even a sword. I spent the last year in training hell. A few months ago he sent me to Great Glacier. I’d rather not talk about what happened up there.”

Sheyna nodded and silence reigned throughout the woods once again. Finally Harry broke the silence. “What about you? What’s been going on since I’ve been MIA?”

“Quite a bit.” Said Sheyna softly “After the mansion raid everyone went back to headquarters. We made it back, but when we got there, Strife soldiers were everywhere. We fought through them and escaped the base in an airship that Andrea and the others stole from Giran. We flew north to Macalania Woods. Bastian set up a base there using the airship as the main building and some capsule cottages for side buildings, I went into Bevelle to see my mother, Andrea and Ethan headed back toward Luca.”

“After I got to Bevelle my mother wasn’t happy. She told me some things that changed the way I see a lot of things. Eventually she let me stay with her and I got a job as a fiend huntress. I checked in on Chaos Flame from time to time, but otherwise I kept to myself and waited to hear any information about you. Things were fine until about seven months ago. The Black Wings invaded Spira with a massive force. SeeD was nowhere to be found. The few Strife soldiers retreated, and the volunteer militia fell easily. Lucca was the first target; they flew in with airships and bombed it. They dropped in troops in all the other cities and Maester Griddock surrendered without a fight, after they’d destroyed half of every major city. The only places they haven’t gotten are New Zanerkand and Mt. Gagazet.”

“So you’ve been fighting them?” Asked Harry once again glancing at her scars.

“I did what I had to do to live.” Said Sheyna “My mother was badly hurt during the initial raid on the city; I was out hunting fiends at the time. I saw the city erupt into flames and rushed back to help. When I

got there I found my mom buried under the rubble. Her left leg and half her right hand were both missing. I'm still not sure how that happened and she never told me. We managed to survive on the streets by the skin of our teeth, but that changed yesterday. A mech cornered us; I fought it off, but not before it forced us out into the open. My mother had been trying to get me to leave, but I wouldn't leave her. She cast a warp spell on me, and I saw her die just before I disappeared."

She started to shake violently with sobs and her eyes brimmed with unshed tears. Harry didn't know what to do, crying women never being his strong suit. He walked over to her and put an arm tentatively around her shoulder. She latched onto him and the tears immediately started to fall. He brought his other arm up and held her for a while simply letting her cry. For about ten minutes she let out all the pent up emotion she'd been holding for the past few months and Harry simply held her. After a while she suddenly let go and started to laugh. Harry was taken aback at first until she looked at him and explained why she was laughing.

"I tried to kill you." She said still half crying and half laughing

"Yeah you did." Said Harry realizing that she was trying to distract herself from the grief "You even used a Limit Break on me."

"Sorry." She muttered sheepishly

"No worries." Said Harry "You didn't hurt me. Not that you could."

"What's that supposed to mean?" She asked indignantly "Are you insinuating that I'm weak?"

"Of course not." Said Harry sarcastically

"I'll let that jab slide, this time." She said

"Good." Said Harry "So now what?"

"I think we should head back up to Macalania." Said Sheyna "Problem is it'll take us months to get there, we can't take the main roads because their restricted."

"I can get us there faster." Said Harry "You'll have to let me read your mind a bit though."

"No way!" She said adamantly "I'm not letting you snoop around in my head."

"I promise I won't do anything but get a picture of where we need to go." Said Harry "It's either that or waste a bunch of time walking."

"Alright." Said Sheyna "But if you look at anything else..."

"I'll feel a world of pain, I know." Said Harry "Now hold still and look into my eyes." She did as he asked and he raised his right hand. "Legilimens!" Immediately a wave of images assaulted his vision. He ignored them, not wanting to break her trust and went to her last memory of Bastian. He got a picture of the area near the airship and backed out of her mind.

"That felt very weird." She said

"You felt it?" He asked curiously

"Was I not supposed to?" She asked

"Well usually people can't feel Legilimancy unless they have some type of Occlumency training." Said Harry "You must have some natural ability."

"Hmm." Was all Sheyna said

"Ready?" He asked

"We're leaving already?" She asked

"Yeah, so grab your weapons and let's get going." Said Harry

She grabbed her katana and gun sheath and put them on her back. Next she sheathed her blade and held her gun. Harry walked over to her and placed a hand on her shoulder. "This is going to feel a bit uncomfortable." Before she could respond she felt her body compress and it felt as though she was being forced through a tube.

...

Andrea back flipped as a soldier's grenade exploded where she'd been standing. Her feet landed atop a mech which had been behind her. She viciously drove her gunblade into the mech's head, killing its navigation controls. She jumped off just in time to avoid a rotary blade which inadvertently sliced through the head and down into the cockpit killing the pilot. She silently scoffed at the stupidity of the mech pilots, wondering who trained a soldier to be so incompetent. She looked around to survey the situation. Only two of the twelve cottages remained standing. The rest had been totally destroyed. Corpses of both sides littered the ground, however the losses were higher for Chaos Flame. They'd been severely outnumbered at the start of the battle, and now they were down to a quarter of their original force. The Black Wings were down to about half their soldiers, but only seven of the some thirty odd mechs had been destroyed. The things were very resilient and not all the pilots were as stupid as the one she'd just caused to kill himself.

The mechs had grouped themselves together. Five of them in the middle with their massive laser cannons protruding from their heads. The other mechs surrounded them, forming a protective ring. Andrea saw what they were doing and thought frantically for a way to stop them. If they fired those cannons they could destroy the ship, this would cut off any means of retreat, as well as destroying the majority of their supplies. If she was at optimal junction capacity the mechs would be no problem. As it stood, she was barely above the speed and strength of a normal person. Had it not been for her impressive skills as a warrior she'd have died long ago. She really only had one option left. It wouldn't kill the mechs, but it would slow them down. "Thunder Storm!" She called as she used her magic to bring forth Quazicotl.

The thunderbird screeched in defiance as it soared into the air. The sky grew dark with thunderclouds and rain started to pour throughout the battlefield. Quazicotl gathered lightning energy in its mouth. Soon a gigantic ball of lightning was formed. The GF thrust its neck toward the gathered mechs, using its wings to give the ball more force. It seemed Andrea underestimated the strength of the GF. The attack did a lot more than slow the mechs down. Their internal operations systems short circuited and their armor was heavily charred as well, leaving the mechs no more than statues.

The soldiers weren't giving up yet though. A few of the mechs could still move, albeit sluggishly, and they started to move close to each other. The next thing the SeeD knew the mechs were fully functional again. The four of them started to shift their shape and combine into one huge mech. It looked like its smaller counterparts, only larger. Andrea soon found out that there were other differences as well. Instead of rotary blades this mech had two plasma swords sprouting from each wrist. It also had a considerable amount of laser cannons.

"Shit." She muttered as she fell back toward the ship.

The monstrous mech had no regard for its fellow soldiers. It simply plowed through the stationary mechs, killing the other soldiers as it stomped its way toward the base. As Andrea drew closer to the ship, she noticed that it was started to rise into the air. It got about ten feet off the ground and turned so that the dragon's head was facing the incoming mech. As the mech prepared to fire, some slits on the side of the ship opened and warheads poked out of them, from the its mouth a beam of supercharged energy started to form. The two machines fired at the same time. The airship's main cannon easily overpowered the combined force of the mech's smaller lasers, and with the addition of the missiles the battle was easily won.

As the smoke cleared Andrea saw that all the Black Wings were dead. Unfortunately so were most of the Chaos Flame members. She could see Ethan panting on the other side of the battlefield. A few other mercenaries were scattered about, some sporting serious wounds. All around the clearing bodies adorned the landscape. The airship sat back down and the entrance ramp lowered. A grim faced Bastian and

Sophia walked down followed by the remaining medics. From out of the two remaining cottages five people came.

“Well we won.” Said Bastian somberly “It’s too bad I couldn’t get the weapons up sooner.”

“So that’s what you were doing.” Said Andrea “I was wondering where you two were.”

“I would’ve been out her, but me and Sophia are the only ones that know how to work the ship.” Said Bastian “After the mechs showed up, I knew what I had to do.”

“So many died.” Whispered Sophia quietly

Ethan limped over to them, using his staff as a walking stick. “Anyone got a Curaga?” He asked hopefully

Bastian complied, casting the spell on his friend. The group was stopped from further questioning by the sound of a ‘pop’ near the ship.

“Bloody hell!” Said Harry as he saw the carnage left by the battle.

All heads snapped around at the sound of the wizard’s voice. They saw Harry standing near the ship looking around at the decimated woods and the smoking corpses. They also saw Sheyna off to the side vomiting.

“That was the most horrible thing I’ve ever felt!” He yelled at Harry

“Well I told you it would feel weird.” He said. He turned to the assembled group “What the hell happened here?”

“Let’s get back on the ship.” Said Bastian “I’m sure we all have tales to tell.”

Everyone agreed and they all boarded the airship. Harry looked around, impressed with the craftsmanship of the ship. They headed to a room with a large round table. They all picked chairs and sat around it.

“Well.” Said Bastian “I think I speak for everyone when I say, I’m glad your alive Harry. That being said, I have two very important questions. What the hell happened to you, and where is the materia?”

Harry reached up to his bangle and unfastened the black materia. He sat it on the table and everyone looked at him oddly.

“That doesn’t look like any materia I’ve ever seen.” Said Sheyna

“It changed when my blood got absorbed into it.” Explained Harry “It doesn’t cast Ultima anymore either, now it casts Doomsday and Apocalypse.”

“You’re kidding.” Said Bastian disbelief clear in his voice. “Those spells are the most powerful thing you can cast, only sorceresses and extremely skilled black mages can cast them.”

“So I’ve been told.” Said Harry “As for what I’ve been doing, training.”

“Training?” Asked Andrea “For a whole year and a half?”

“I didn’t get much of a choice.” Said Harry “You know that other offworlder you told me about?” They nodded and he continued “Turns out he was a Dark Lord from my world who drank something called the Elixir of Life. This made him ageless, he’s been alive here for over a thousand years, even though only a little over fifty years passed since his ‘death’ in my world.”

“That’s impossible!” Said Sophia “No one can live that long.”

“Nothing’s impossible.” Said Harry “I’m living proof of that. Anyway, he’s the one who rescued me from the explosion caused by the Ultima spell. Wizards have something called a life debt, which occurs if one wizard or which saves another’s life. He used this little stipulation to force me into training. It was one of the most brutal things I’ve ever been through. I can’t complain much though, I’ve gotten a lot stronger and I perfected a lot of spell areas where I used to have trouble.”

“What took you so long to come back?” Asked Sophia “I mean how long does it take to learn some new spells?”

“I was trapped on an island.” He said, he then went on to explain his training in more detail. He told him about his Animagus forms, which they didn’t believe until he showed them, then he told him about his battles with Grindlewald. He glanced over his time on Great Glacier simply telling them that he’d come into his wolf form, fought an enemy and that Grindlewald pulled him out of the battle before it was over.

“...Then I trained for a few more months until Grindlewald and I fought one last time. He underestimated me, and I killed him.”

“Where’d you get that gunblade?” Asked Andrea “It looks like a Blast Edge if I’m not mistaken.”

“I met someone on Great Glacier who gave it to me.” Said Harry evasively, for some reason talking about the events of that time were extremely uncomfortable.

“So you don’t know how to use it then.” Said Andrea

“Well...” Said Harry thinking about how to answer this.

“Just tell them.” Said Seth

“My GF taught me.” Said Harry

“How?” Asked Bastian “Carbuncle barely talks to me, and I doubt he has much to teach.”

“Well Seth transferred his knowledge of the gunblade into my head.” Said Harry “I combined it with my sword knowledge, and now I know how to use it.”

“You’re leaving stuff out Harry.” Said Sheyna “I can tell, but whatever, you’ve got a right to hold some secrets.”

“So what’s been going on with you guys?” Asked Harry changing the subject. “Sheyna told me what happened after I blacked out, but I

don't know what happened with you two." He pointed across the table to Andrea and Ethan.

"We left here and went back to Lucca." Said Andrea "We wanted to see if anything was left of you and get the things we'd left at the inn we were staying at. We didn't find anything left of you, obviously, but we did get your trunk and the other things we left at the inn."

"You figured out the shrinking method then?" Asked Harry

"Eventually." Answered Ethan "Why anyone would trigger it to respond the way you did, I'll never know."

"What's wrong with kicking it?" Asked Harry

"What sane person would think to do that?" Answered Ethan

"Well, I didn't rig it for just anyone to open." Said Harry "If I'd known I was going to be abducted by a psycho I would've told you how to open it beforehand."

"Now, now boys no need to get all worked up." Said Sophia "We've all had a long day, and I for one could use some rest."

"I hear you." Said Ethan "My arms feel like their made of solid adamantium."

"Well we'll talk again tomorrow morning." Said Bastian "Just to warn you, I'll be moving the ship to another location, so if we start shaking its turbulence."

The group of tired warriors rose from the table and headed to the quaint troop quarters, located at the bottom of the ship. They didn't know what lay ahead of them next, but what they did know was that they'd face whatever it was with the same determination they'd shown thus far. Unfortunately for them they were going to need every bit of it and then some.

...

A/N: Well I decided to post this early because I got so many reviews for the last chapter, and since it was already finished I figured why wait? On another note, for all of you anonymous reviewers. If you ask a question, and you don't leave an email address, how do you expect me to answer your questions? Luckily for you I found a way. This story now has a forum, I will post a copy of all my review responses there. That way I can answer some of the same questions many of you ask, and have a place to refer those people that ask questions I've already answered. To get to the forum just go through the link in my profile. Please leave a review telling me how much you hated or liked this chapter. If you say you hated it please state why. REVIEW, REVIEW, REVIEW!

Onboard Black Inferno

Harry rubbed his eyes as he opened them groggily. Bastian had been right about there being turbulence, sleep had been very hard to come by the night before, thanks mostly to the wild jerking of the ship. Harry swung his legs over the side of the bed and stood up. Taking a quick stretch, he spied the trunk sitting in the corner of the room. He walked over to it, kicked it and the top flew open. He looked inside and saw all his things were still there. He picked up the book which Fred and George had given him. Studying it for a while, he found that it contained the instructions for making Extendable Ears, Shield Bracelets, something called a Big Boom-Boom Stick, Invisible Hats and a slew of other useful, or just plain hilarious devices.

Setting the book aside, for experimentation later, he ventured out of his room to explore the ship more thoroughly. Bastian had dubbed the ship Black Inferno. Harry didn't know where he'd gotten that name from, but he figured it had something to do with his fascination with fire. Passing one of the windows, he saw that it was dark out. He also saw that the ship wasn't moving anymore. Looking outside he saw a lot of snow. He figured they must be somewhere in Glacia. Shrugging his shoulders at Bastian's choice of landing sights, he continued walking down the corridor. He passed several doors, which he knew led into other bedrooms. He came to the lift and decided to head to the deck. Once there he stepped out into the chilly night air. He looked up at the sky and saw the four moons shining brightly against the dark sky. He marveled at the different colors once again. The red moon was only half full, but it was covering part of the blue moon. That one was only three quarters full. The yellow moon sat off to the side, it was the only one which was full. Finally the green moon sat behind all of them forming a kind of background. He noticed that there were a lot more stars visible here. In all his time in this world, this was the first time he'd looked at the night sky thoroughly. He didn't study it long though, because it was alien to him. He couldn't recognize any constellations, nor see any planets he recognized. This was a further reminder that, despite how comfortable he was starting to feel here, this place wasn't home.

He heard the door to the lift open and turned around. Sophia strode out of the lift and walked over to the edge of the deck. She didn't

seem to notice him and totally ignored his presence. She sat down and pulled her knees into her chest. She seemed very deep in thought. Harry just stood there for a moment, until he decided to make his presence known.

"Nice night." He said startling her.

"Harry!" She said breathlessly "I didn't even see you there."

"So I figured." Said the wizard "Can't sleep either?"

"I've got a lot on my mind." She said

"Don't we all." He said sagely "Anything I can help with?"

"I doubt it." She said

"Okay." He said turning back to look at the icy wilderness beyond.

Silence reigned for some time, until Sophia finally spoke again.

"I just feel so useless sometimes." She admitted "During battle I'm hardly any help, my weapon of choice has been damn near useless lately, and the only area I'm halfway decent in, magic, hasn't been up to par lately either."

"You're not useless." Said Harry "If it weren't for you, we'd probably have died while fighting Seth. You helped during the battle at Giran's mansion too. That Krorg thing was pretty tough. I don't really know what kind of battles you've been in after that, but you're not useless Sophia. If anything your healing technique makes up for what you lack in combat."

"But you see." She said "If I were a better warrior, people wouldn't need as much healing."

"Everyone has their place." Said Harry "Some of us have to be in the thick of things, putting our lives on the line by attacking head on. Some people belong on the side lines, or behind the idiots, like me, who have to charge head on. You don't have to be right there in the

enemy's face to be useful in a battle. If no one was left in reserve, who'd bail the idiots out of the trouble they get into?"

Sophia smiled at him, her mood starting to lighten "You've got a point." She said "Hyne knows if it weren't for me, Bastian, Ethan and Andrea would probably be dead, Antym too."

"Who is Antym anyway?" Asked Harry "I've heard you guys took about him, but all I've been able to gather is that he betrayed Garden and stole something very important."

"Well," Said Sophia "The five of us, me, Andrea, Bastian, Ethan and Antym, we started at Garden at the same time, we were twelve. SeeD training is very difficult and many people give up before the first year is out. Anyway, we all trained together. Bastian, Andrea and Antym all chose the gunblade to specialize in. I chose the crossbow and Ethan picked the bow staff. After a while we all became friends, more or less. Some of us got closer to each other than others. Like me and Bastian or Andrea and Antym."

"I see." Said Harry "So does anyone know what happened to Antym after he left Garden?"

"According to Andrea he's with Baron." Said Sophia "She said she saw Griever, that's what he stole, during the battle in Moonflow."

"I don't remember seeing anything, other than that damn sphere." Said Harry

"Well you were a bit preoccupied." Said Sophia amusedly "You know they got all that on camera right?"

"I remember." Said Harry "When we docked in Lucca a mob tried to rush me. Calling me the 'Blitzball Hero' I'm used to that type of thing though."

"You did mention, that you're a bit of a celebrity in you're world." Said Sophia

Harry scoffed. "Yeah, for something I didn't even do." He said "All I ever wanted to do was just be Harry Potter, but no, I had to be 'The-Boy-Who-Lived' and 'The Chosen One.' It kind of serves the Wizarding World right, I'm gone and now they have to deal with Voldemort on their own. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't wish that nightmare on anyone, but my people are so bloody fickle. When I was fourteen they slandered my name at the drop of a hat, and when I was fifteen they called me a delusional, attention seeking brat. Then when they got proof that I was telling the truth, suddenly I'm everyone's hero again."

"You've had quite the life then." Said Sophia "I suppose your childhood wasn't that bad then, I mean if you were supposed to be some kind of savior."

Harry laughed bitterly at this. "If only." He said "I was given to my relatives, they weren't magical people, they actually despised it, so in my Uncle Vernon's infinite wisdom, they tried to beat the magic out of me."

"What do you mean?" Asked Sophia hesitantly

"Exactly what I said." Said Harry "I lived in a cupboard under the stairs from the time I was one year old, until I turned eleven. Whenever something odd would happen, I'd get blamed, whenever I did better than Dudley, my fat oaf of a cousin, I'd get punished. This usually meant a thorough beating, followed by spending a few days in the cupboard. No food, no water, and only leaving once a day to use the loo."

"You should consider the homicide option I gave you before." Said Seth "I swear it will make you feel a lot better, give you some closure." Harry simply ignored the guardian, even though he was considering his advice.

"That's horrible!" Said Sophia "You were a child! What kind of monsters are your family?"

"They aren't my family." Corrected Harry "Their just blood relatives, I consider the Weasley's as my family. Although it seems most of them are dead."

Seeing that the subject was dampening the mood Sophia quickly changed it. "So what are you going to do now?"

"Do you happen to know where the Iafa Tree is?" Asked Harry

"It's said to be in the northern part of Myst." Said Sophia "But no one's seen it for quite some time."

"Well Grindlewald told me to go there, if I wanted answers." Said Harry

"What do you think you'll find there?" Asked Sophia

"Who knows?" Said Harry "It could be a death trap, knowing Grindlewald, but I don't have any other leads, so this is my best bet."

"Well, thanks for talking with me Harry." Said Sophia

"What are friends for?" Asked Harry

"I think I'll try to get some sleep now." Said Sophia

"Yeah, me too." Said Harry "Now that Bastian isn't trying to crash the ship."

Sophia laughed at him before they both walked into the lift and went down to the quarters' floor.

Kuja flew over the ocean at phenomenal speed. He needed to explore this world, in order to see how best to disrupt things. It wouldn't do for him to start his manipulations and only be half informed. Zidane said he could do as he pleased, and this was definitely a great chance to release some pent up frustration from his failings during his last attempt at global destruction.

“Ah destruction, such a beautiful thing.” He thought dreamily. Seeing the many ways to end a life or to destroy nature’s inherent beauty was what he lived for. His pre-programming as Garland’s angel of death was so deep rooted that it was all he could find pleasure in. Now Zidane was letting him cause pain and suffering on a level that he himself had fought against for most of his natural life. It was ironic really, what happened to Zidane. The good and noble hero now reduced to that which he despised. Kuja was still unclear on the details of how Zidane had come to rule the realm of death, all he knew was that it had something to do with the crystal inside Memoria, or The Crystal Citadel as it was now known.

Kuja was interrupted from his musings, when he felt a dark presence slam into him. He felt such anger and hatred from it that it caused him to shudder in pleasure. This spirit also held tremendous power. If he could bend it to his will he might even be able to break the hold Zidane had on him. Without a moment’s hesitation, he reached out with his magic and touched the spirit.

“Who disturbs me?” Asked the spirit

“You’re new master.” Said Kuja

“I serve no one.” Said the spirit adamantly

“I’m afraid that’s about to change.” Said the mage, surrounding the spirit in a magical hold.

“I am Lord Voldemort, I serve no one!” Yelled the spirit.

Kuja was surprised when the spirit retaliated with magic of its own, pushing his influence away.

“You have great power.” Said the spirit “It will be mine!”

With that the spirit suddenly became visible. It was no more than a black cloud emanating with magical energy. It surrounded Kuja and penetrated into his body. The mage screamed in pain as the spirit slowly started to take over his mind. He wasn’t giving up without a fight though. He pushed against the abomination with everything he

had, Soon he was bombarded with images. A young boy being beaten by a group of other children. The same boy reveling in the torture of two children inside of a cave. Then a young man shooting a green light at an older man, who looked to be his father. Next he saw some sort of ritual; the young man was tearing apart his own soul. People in black cloaks and white masks bowing around him. Torturing countless people over and over again. Kuja reveled in the last image, finding it highly amusing. Finally there was just emptiness. This spanned the majority of the memories.

Next came information. Things that the spirit knew, he now knew. Magic spells, not of this world. Potions of great power, rituals of the darkest kind. Probably the most valuable information of all was that pertaining to the offworlder. He already knew that the boy's name was Harry Potter, but the spirit knew much more. It knew his weaknesses, strengths and best of all, how to torture him in the best of ways.

The pain suddenly stopped, and the spirit didn't try to force itself onto Kuja anymore

"It seems we have common interests." Said Voldemort "We both have power and information that aids the other, I propose a merger of spirits. You will be able to overpower your brother, and have all the power of a fully trained dark wizard; I will have a new body and be able to get revenge on Potter."

"I agree." Said Kuja "This will make things very interesting."

Their magicks started to merge into one, as did their consciousnesses. Soon where there were two dark souls, now there stood a new being. He looked exactly the same, aside from the eyes. They now glowed a deep crimson. And power radiated from the mage in black waves.

"So much power." Said a voice that sounded like two people talking. "Potter, you will pay for thwarting me, and Zidane you shall suffer as well. I'll take the key for myself, and then nothing can stop me." He laughed evilly as he flew off toward Gaea; He had a president to meet with.

...

Andrea studied the young man sitting at a table in the galley on the airship. She knew he was leaving something out of his story, and she felt it was something very important. She looked once again at the blue crystal hanging from his neck. Something about it nagged at the back of her mind, but she couldn't place it. Every time she asked him about it, Harry would just say he found it while on Great Glacier. Currently Ethan was attempting to teach him how to play Triple Triad. It was a card game, mostly played by SeeD in their free time, she found it incredibly stupid, but the one advantage it did have, was that some of the cards could be turned into useful items, provided you had the right GF.

"So let me get this straight." Said Harry "If my card has a higher number than yours, I win that card."

"Yeah." Said Ethan "That's the basic idea anyway, then you get into plus, same and combo it gets a bit more complicated."

"And you're teaching me this because...?" Asked Harry

"I'm bored." Said Ethan "Andrea won't play, Bastian's too busy, Sophia detests the game and Sheyna, well she seems to want to be alone."

"What if I had something else to do?" Asked Harry

"Do you?" Asked Ethan

"No." Said Harry "But what if I did? "

"You'd be doing it." Said Ethan

"Point taken." Said Harry "So what's that other stuff you were talking about?"

Andrea tuned the rest of their conversation out, not wanting to hear Ethan discuss the finer points of Plus, Same and Combo rules. The

peaceful environment was shattered by the sound of Harry screaming and clapping both hands over his scar.

“What the hell?” He hissed in obvious pain

“You alright man?” Asked Ethan nervously

Andrea too was apprehensive. The last time Harry had done that, he blew up an entire mansion and disappeared for a year. Fortunately, Harry seemed to relax after a few minutes and removed his hands from his forehead. He was still breathing heavily; the scar was also an angry red color.

“What was that?” Asked Andrea

“Voldemort.” Was all Harry said before leaving the room. The two SeeDs looked at each other. Ethan shrugged and Andrea did the same in response.

“What do you think he meant by that?” Ethan finally asked

“He said Voldemort.” Said Andrea “That’s the name of the Dark Lord in his world, so I assume he meant something about him.”

“Still, that doesn’t explain the scar thing, or why he screamed.” Pointed out Ethan

“Yes it does.” Said Andrea “During his interrogation he told me that he and Voldemort share a connection, if one does something, the other can feel it. That means something must have happened in his world.”

“That explains why he walked out.” Said Ethan “Must be hard, knowing your home is being destroyed by your worst enemy, and not being able to do anything about it.”

“He hides it well though.” Said Andrea “I’m worried about what’ll happen once he breaks.”

“You think he will?” Asked Ethan worriedly

“Everyone has a breaking point.” Said Andrea “Some people are just stronger than others, Harry has already suffered a lot, and I’m not sure how much more he can take.”

“What do you think will happen if he can’t handle it anymore?” Asked Ethan

“It’s hard to say.” Said Andrea “He could either give up on life completely, or depending on what caused him to break, he could go off on a rampage.”

“That would be bad.” Said Ethan “He’s pretty strong, it would take a lot to bring him down.”

“That’s why I hope it never happens.” Said Andrea

...

Harry walked down the corridor, not having a particular destination in mind. What he saw confused him. It was just the middle of the ocean at first. But then he saw a man with long silver hair and maroon colored eyes. He’d seen two suns in the vision as well. This meant that it was on Temprus. What did that mean? Was Voldemort now here? Suddenly Harry had a startling thought. “The Horcruxes...What if the pieces of soul escaped?” It was a reasonable thought, considering that the Horcruxes were magical objects. It would make sense that they would have some kind of reaction from crossing over to this world. His wand and invisibility cloak had fused with him after all. The Horcruxes had been in his trunk at the time. When he’d checked on them, he saw that they were cracked and worn looking. Now he cursed himself for assuming that it would have been that easy. He was Harry Potter and nothing could ever be easy for him.

His feet had carried him to the lift, and now he was headed into the engine room. He came out and saw the huge fusion drive engine going at full blast. They were currently headed toward another sight to land for the night. Harry had yet to inform the rest of the group of his plans, but now he knew he’d need to do that soon. If a part of Voldemort was in this world, it was here because he’d brought it with

him. Therefore it was his responsibility to deal with, prophecy or no prophecy.

"You seem deep in thought." Said a female voice startling him slightly

"I've got a lot on my mind Sheyna." He said simply

"Brooding again then?" She asked raising an eyebrow

"I don't brood." Protested Harry

"Yes you do." Said Sheyna "You're doing it right now."

"Well then let me 'brood' in peace." Said Harry

"I could do that." Said Sheyna "But then I'd never find out what you're brooding about."

"It's not important." Said Harry

"If it's not important, then why are you thinking about it so hard?" She countered

"Because I just am!" He snapped

Sheyna was unfazed by his biting tone and pressed on. "Thinking about home again?"

"Something like that." He said

"Did that other wizard give you any clue how to get back?" She asked

"All he said was head to the lafa Tree." Said Harry

"How do you plan to get there?" She asked

"I'm hoping that Bastian will give me a lift." Said Harry "If it's too much trouble, I'll find a way."

"That wasn't all you were thinking about, was it?" She asked knowingly

"If I said I don't want to discuss it. Would you leave me alone?" Asked Harry already knowing the answer.

"Since that's the second thing you refuse to talk about, no." Said Sheyna "Either tell me what happened up on Great Glacier, or tell me what has you down here brooding."

"Fine!" Said Harry resignedly "I'll tell you why I'm down here. I had a vision through my scar a little while ago. The thing is, it wasn't from home, it was from here."

"But I thought you told me that you only get those from Moldy-whatever." Said Sheyna

"Voldemort." Harry corrected "Though his reaction if anyone called him that would be pretty funny."

"Okay, Vol-de-mort." She said emphasizing each syllable. "So what does that mean?"

"I'm not sure." Said Harry "But I've got a nasty suspicion. Remember the Horcruxes I told you about?" She nodded and he went on. "I thought they were destroyed, but I'm guessing now that they aren't, well maybe they are, but the soul shards inside them are definitely still around."

"So the same bastard that's terrorizing your world is here too?" Asked Sheyna

"More or less." Said Harry "Now even if I find a way home, I have to stop him first. I brought him here, so he's my responsibility."

"He's just a spirit though right?" She asked hopefully

"I don't think so." Said Harry "At least not anymore, and even if he was, it doesn't make him any less dangerous. More so I'd say, sine you really can't touch a spirit."

“So what are you going to do?” Asked Sheyna

“First I’ll head to the Iafa Tree.” Said Harry “Grindlewald said there was no way back anyway, so I’ll just see what’s there and go on from that point.”

“Well I’m coming with you.” Said Sheyna

“You’re what?” He asked, not sure he heard her correctly

“I said I’m coming with you.” She repeated “And don’t give that look, I know you’ll need help, and I don’t really have much else to do now anyway.”

“If you insist.” Said Harry “Especially since I now I can’t change your mind anyway.”

“You got that right.” Said Sheyna “I’m not letting you get lost again Harry.”

Harry smiled at her, glad that she was proving to be a true friend. “If I never said it, Thanks Sheyna, for everything.”

“You’re welcome Harry.” She said

...

A few hours later found everyone gathered in the galley. The ship was now landed in a small valley deep within a mountain range. They were near the northwest corner of the continent, the part closest to the Baron continent. Harry had wondered about this, since Baron was one of the people they were trying to avoid. Bastian reasoned that SeeD as well as Strife would want to stay as far away from Baron as possible, therefore, since they wanted to avoid both of them, they would be better off going closer to Baron. They were still far enough away from the capital not to be immediately spotted. The capital city, known as Celestia, was located at the southern tip of the continent.

“So Harry, you wanted to talk to us?” Asked Bastian.

“What are you guys planning to do now?” He asked

“We’re still trying to figure that out.” Said Bastian “Our main goal right now is not to get caught, that’s why we’ve been flying the way we have. We don’t want to remain in one place for too long.”

“We’ll run out supplies soon though, right?” Asked Harry

“Yes and no.” Said Sophia “We’ll always have fresh water, thanks to the recycling system, we will need to get some new food though.”

“How’s that recycling thing work?” Asked Sheyna

“Don’t ask.” Said Bastian “You can probably figure it out on your own.”

“Fuel also isn’t a problem.” Said Sophia “Fusion drive makes its own power.”

“So how much food do we have?” Asked Ethan

“I’d say enough to feed everyone on this ship, for about three weeks. This is with no rationing protocol.”

“We’ll need to stop before then anyway.” Said Bastian “No reason to have everyone going stir crazy from being cooped on this tin can.”

“Well I wanted to know if you could take me to the Iafa Tree.” Said Harry

“Why do you want to go there?” Asked Bastian

“I was told I’d find answers there.” Said Harry

“What was with your scar earlier?” Asked Andrea

“He’s here.” Said Harry

“Whose here?” Asked the SeeD

"Voldemort." Said Harry "That's what I saw."

"Did you see where he was?" Asked Ethan

"All I could see was ocean." Said Harry

"That means he could be anywhere." Said Andrea

"Not much I can do about him now." Said Harry "So what are you and Ethan going to do?"

"We have no idea where garden is." Said Andrea "I suppose we'll stay with you. Before I told the commander you were dead, those were our orders."

"If that's what you want to do." Said Harry

"Okay." Said Bastian "I'm going to disband the crew."

"You're going to do what!" Asked Sophia incredulously

"We've only got ten people left." Said Bastian, "Shade, Sheila and Von all died during the last battle, the only contact I've got left is Cruise. This ship is all that's left."

"I don't think the crew will go for that Bastian." Said Sophia "They all joined up with you because they agreed with your stance of protecting Spira. If you quit now, what are they going to think? We've still got a chance to save our home."

"We're only about sixteen people in all." Said Bastian "What can we possibly do? There are two armies out to get us, not to mention an entire fleet of peacekeepers on the lookout for us. And I wasn't going to give up either. I was going to say that we'd go with Harry and then after that we'd try again."

"So why disband the crew?" Asked Sophia

“They won’t want to go with him.” Said Bastian “They don’t know him like we do.”

“They’ll go wherever you ask them to.” Said Sophia “They trust you, and I’m sure Harry will help us out, won’t you?”

“Well...” Said Harry “The last time I helped you, I ended up almost getting killed.”

“Minor technicality.” Said Sophia “We’ll just try to avoid that this time, think of it as repayment for the ride, and the food, and the sleeping quarters and...”

“I get it.” Said Harry “You didn’t have to blackmail me though, I was going to say yes.”

“Good.” Said Sophia, turning her attention back to Bastian “See he’ll help, now you can truthfully say that this will help us liberate Spira in the long run.”

“So you’re saying I should deceive them.” Said Bastian

“You wouldn’t be deceiving them.” Said Sophia “Just tell them what’s going on. I’m sure they’ll understand. Besides, who will run the ship while we’re off with Harry?”

“I see your point.” Said Bastian “Okay Harry, we’re with you, if you help us in return.”

“That seems fair to me.” Said Harry “So when are we heading for the lafa tree?” He asked

“We can only fly so far.” Said Bastian “Flying that way puts us very close to where Strife headquarters is. We can fly past the Icicle Inn area, but after that, we’ll need to go on foot.”

“Why don’t we land a few miles west of Icicle Inn.” Said Andrea “That way we can restock supplies, then we can be prepared once we go out into the tundra.”

“Alright.” Said Bastian, “We can hide the ship, and the crew can stay in the city, I’m sure they can always use more fiend hunters, and everyone should have enough in EFC to get them on their feet.”

“It’s settled then.” Said Sophia “We’ll start heading that way tomorrow.”

...

That night Harry’s sleep was far from peaceful. It seemed that this new incarnation of Voldemort was determined to not let him get any peace, that or he didn’t realize he was linked to Harry. Harry found himself standing in a very ornate office. It seemed to be at the top of a very tall building, judging by what he saw out the window. He walked up to a desk, where a man who looked to be in his forties sat. His brown hair spiked up in every direction, there were also places where it was going grey. His eyes were an odd purple color and seemed to glow.

“Mister...Kuja was it?” Asked the man behind the desk

“That is correct President Strife.” Said Kuja

“I’m surprised you managed to get an appointment on such short notice.” Said the president “I’ll assume by your attire that this isn’t a pleasure call.”

“It depends on your definition of pleasure.” Said Kuja “I’m merely here offering my services.”

“And what services would those be?” Asked the president

“I can sway the sorceress to your cause.” Said Kuja

“And what makes you think I need a sorceress?” Asked the president “I’m running a communications company.”

“Oh come now.” Said Kuja “We both know that this a front, your company rules over this whole continent, not to mention a good deal

of influence in the Spiran underground and Glacia. But you still don't have Baron, Galbadia or Eshar."

"I'm listening." Said the president

"You want the sorceress on your side so that you can stand against Baron." Said Kuja "Since they have a sorceress it's the only logical thing to do. I have ways of convincing the sorceress to aid you. I can also get you some of Eshar's finest technology. I can also deal with the Offworlder for you."

"You talk a very good game Mr. Kuja." Said Strife "However I'll need proof."

"Tell me how I can prove myself, and I'll do it." Said Kuja

"Get me the codes to Eshar's mainframe." Said the president

"Done." Said Kuja, he waved his hand and a thick packet of papers appeared in it. He handed the papers to the president.

"Impossible!" Breathed Strife "You've got the codes to every military archive. Satellites, bio weapons, it's all here." The man hurriedly typed in the access codes into his computer. Harry didn't know what he saw, but if the expression on his face was any indication, he liked it very much.

"I don't know how you got these." Said the president "But if you can get these from out of Eshar, I'm sure you can sway Anastasia to our cause."

The vision started to fade, and soon Harry and Kuja were standing alone in a room of total blackness.

"Like what you saw Potter?" Asked Kuja, but his voice was different. It was no longer the soft melodious voice, but a mixture of that and a higher, slightly raspy voice. A voice Harry recognized as Tom Riddle. "I decided that you should know exactly who your enemy was. It will make things more interesting."

“Possessing another poor sap to do your bidding Tom?” Snapped Harry

“Harry, Harry, Harry.” Said Voldemort chidingly “You think so little of me. Kuja and I came to a mutual understanding. We both want the same thing, so we’re working together to get it.”

“I’ll stop you.” Said Harry

“Ha! You’ll stop me?” He asked mockingly “You have no idea how much power I have. I could kill you right now.” He thrust his hand forward and Harry felt a searing pain wash over him. The pain kept getting worse and worse, until Harry couldn’t help but cry out in agony. “It would be so easy...” Said Voldemort as he squeezed his hand even harder. Harry’s screams, if possible, increased even more. “But I won’t do it.” He said letting go. Harry slumped to the ground panting. “Now do you understand Potter? You can’t hope to win.” He waved his hand, causing Harry to go tumbling backwards. “Sleep well young Potter. We’ll meet face to face soon enough, and that is the day you will die.”

Harry shot up out of bed, crying out in pain and clutching his scar. He saw that it was now morning. He felt far from well rested though. He kept replaying the vision over and over again. He could have died, but Voldemort had decided to toy with him first. Harry swore that he’d make him regret his decision. He wasn’t strong enough now, but he’d get stronger, and when he did Voldemort and Kuja both would be the only one’s dying.

...

A/N: The action lacked in this chapter, but you can’t have a story with action, action, action and no plot developments. I hope no one is confused about where that spirit of Voldemort came from. I mentioned it back in chapter 6 and I’ve also mentioned it in passing during a few conversations between Merlin and Zidane. The next chapter is Wizarding stuff again, but it will be the last time I devote a chapter solely to that place. The action will pick up again in chapter 22, and now I’m off to write chapter 23. Let me know your thoughts or

comments on this chapter, and if you want check out the forum for this story.

Reunion of a Dark Soul

A black robed figure glided down the halls of the Department of Mysteries. Their face was hidden by a hood, only their mouth and chin were visible, and even that seemed to be obscured somewhat. The figure walked into a room full of black doors. Before the room could start to spin, the figure raised their wand and shot a spark at the door they wanted to go through. It opened and the figure walked through it. The room was full of strange devices, a mixture of Muggle technology and Wizard engineering and spell crafting. The figure headed into another door, where another dark figure stood.

"You're late #68." Said the other figure

"I got held up with the Order." Said the figure, now identified as #68.

"That's no excuse." Sneered the other figure. "You know very well that I can't afford to be absent from his service very long. He is already displeased with me for my failures in capturing the Weasley girl."

"So what did you need to discuss #34?" Asked #68

"He's planning something, something that could win this war for him. Not just against wizards either, The Muggle governments are aware of his actions as well. All across the world other dark wizards are joining him. That's why I called this meeting."

Just then the door opened and other figures started to pour into the room. There were about twenty figures in all, all wearing black robes with hoods obscuring their faces.

"This meeting of the Unspeakables shall come to order." Said #34
"Now that #68 decided to join us. You all are aware of the increased seismic activity. We first thought that this was connected to Voldemort. He is aware of it, but he is just as troubled by it as we are. It is my opinion that these events are magically based, but it seems as though an outside force is doing it. Therefore, we can only wait, and see what results from it. Now onto more depressing topics. You all know the assignment given to me by #4 before his death. I am

once again in service to the Dark Lord. He now trusts me a great deal, thanks to #4's plan. Unfortunately, Voldemort has become even more powerful. As best I can tell he has enough magical power to defeat at least 100 wizards and witches at the same time, with little to no effort."

"How can anyone be that strong!" Asked one of the figures aghast

"Because #92, he has a deep knowledge of the dark arts." Explained #34 "He used this knowledge to perform a ritual, and that ritual seems to have worked."

"What did the ritual entail?" Asked #68

"I am still unclear of that." Said #34 "He was very secretive about it; All I know is that it involved the Weasley girl."

"So what happened to her?" Asked #68

"My best guess is that she is dead." Said #34 "Her magical signature can't be traced, and our sensors can even penetrate the toughest wards. If she were alive, we'd be able to get a lock on her magical core."

"Too bad she had to die with everyone thinking she was a Death Eater." Said #68

"Yes, what a pity." Said #34, although it didn't sound as though he cared much, in fact he sounded almost happy at the notion of the girl being dead. "As unfortunate as the event is, we have other things to discuss. The Unspeakables of the other Wizarding nations have contacted us. The Muggle governments are going to expose the magical world. They feel that war is eminent, and they don't think wizards can handle it on their own. That and Muggle killings are on the rise. Obliviators are taxed to the limit; they can't get to every case in time for news to spread. In two days there will be a worldwide announcement, the heads of all the major magical governments will have a press conference with the major governing bodies of the Muggle world. They are holding this meeting in Cairo."

“Why Egypt?” Asked another figure

“Because Egypt is the most central location.” Said #34 “This meeting presents a large problem though. Voldemort plans on attacking it. He hopes to destroy all the world’s leaders in one fell swoop. If he succeeds, both the Muggle and Magical world will be thrown into chaos.”

“Won’t they have security though?” Asked #92

“The Dark Lord is going to give this operation his personal touch.” Said #34 “There were only a handful of wizards and witches that could match him in power before, now he is the most powerful wizard on the planet. I may even go as far to say that he has surpassed Merlin.”

This was met with several gasps from the assembled Unspeakables. Merlin had been the most powerful wizard ever. The idea of a dark wizard having more power than him was unthinkable. The Unspeakables started murmuring amongst themselves, until #34 called for quiet by shooting off a multitude of sparks into the air.

“I know that this information is quite unnerving.” He stated “However we must try and come up with a plan of action. They won’t cancel the conference. They feel that their security is enough, and they would be correct if it weren’t for the presence of an extremely powerful Dark Lord.”

“So what are we going to do?” Asked a figure from the back of the room

“Well #73, I have to be there as a Death Eater, that means that all of you are going to be stationed throughout the conference. You will be given portkeys; you will use them to get the world leaders to safety. They will be specially structured to get you through the wards, and into a safe house. You will also have a number of weapons at your disposal, should you need them. However, if everything goes according to plan, you will be out of there before Voldemort breaks the wards.”

“What if we are forced to engage the enemy?” Asked #68

“Then you will fight with everything you have and get out the best way you can.” Said #34 “Try to get a leader out, but if you can’t, self preservation is the number one priority. We need all the able bodied wizards we can get, and you all are the best of the best. Don’t let yourselves get killed if it can be avoided. If there are no further questions, this meeting will be dismissed.”

There were no other questions. The Unspeakables knew what they needed to do and they all dispersed. The time for talking was over, things needed to be done.

...

Voldemort sat on a stone throne, deep within Azkaban fortress. It had been two weeks since the completion of his ritual. He’d found that his power had increased to one hundred times what it had once been. There wasn’t a single person, wizard or otherwise, on the face of the earth who could touch him. He found that he no longer needed his wand, although if he had it, it allowed him to cast more complex spells.

He could also see the magic in the air. The wards and enchantments that littered the prison-turned-palace stretched out before his vision, coating just about everything in the building. Using this new ability, it made it easier to manipulate said wards and enchantments. He could see a large amount of magic coming his direction. He refocused his vision to see things normally. He saw Nagini slithering around the room, heading for him. He wondered if the piece of his soul, which resided in the snake, was just as bitter as the other ones. Nagini had only shown him loyalty and humbleness. Then again if he were trying to fool himself, that’s exactly what he’d do as well. He realized one of his biggest faults was being too obsessed with control. As long as he had loyalty, no matter what the cost, he was happy.

Another thing which bothered him was the amount of power that his counterpart had displayed. He was no match for him now, but before he could have easily been destroyed. This led him to another thought. His counterpart didn’t want to destroy him; he wanted to reunite his

soul. What would the effect on be if this was allowed to happen? Would he still be himself, or would he just become a slave to his other self. Perhaps the largest concern was what this merger would do to his power. Logically it should cause a vast increase in power. As he currently was, he could access most of his power, but he could feel a greater depth to it, as though something was stopping him from reaching it. Thinking about this wouldn't give him any answers though; there was only one thing to do.

"Come here Nagini." He hissed in Parseltongue. His familiar slithered to his side and up onto his lap. He stroked the snake affectionately for a moment. Then he grabbed it by the neck and looked her straight in the eye. "Tell me Nagini, why do you serve me?"

"It is your will master." The snake hissed out.

"Are you aware of what you are Nagini?" Asked Voldemort "That you hold a piece of my soul within you? I want an honest answer."

"I am aware master." Said the snake "The spirit does not find its accommodations suitable, it is in great pain."

"But it does not control you?" Asked Voldemort curiously

"It tries, but I fight it." Said Nagini "It only gets the better of me when I kill."

"I see." Said Voldemort "Would you like to be rid of it?" Asked Voldemort

"If it is your will master." Said the snake

"Very well." Said Voldemort. He switched his vision, so that he could see the magical forces binding the soul. He saw the Horcrux spell as black chains with thick, heavy locks binding a dark orb. The orb contained a good deal of magic within. Voldemort reached out with his magic and slowly released the locks. When that was done he used his magic to pull the dark orb into himself. Immediately he felt its effect. A sharp pain racked through his body. It got worse and worse, to the point where Voldemort was on the floor screaming. Magic

surged through the air. So much so that he could see it with his normal vision. The pain only lasted a minute, but to the Dark Lord it seemed like an eternity.

When the pain finally subsided, Voldemort returned to his feet. He felt better than he had in years, even better than he had before he'd been cast out of his body seventeen years ago. He conjured a mirror and looked at himself. He no longer looked like a half man, half snake. He held more human characteristics. His face, while still extremely pale, had a nose once more. He also felt hair falling down behind his neck. While these changes were pleasant, the most important change was in his magic. He could now begin to touch the vast depths of his power. If this is what happened with only a fraction of his soul, the results of total reunification would be astounding.

Now Voldemort could feel something else. Something was effecting the very magic of the planet. He focused on looking for this magic. He could see a white tinge on almost everything including, to his great horror, himself. He tried to expel the force, but it wouldn't budge. It was too deep rooted to be removed. It didn't seem to be malignant, for that he was grateful, but it still unnerved him.

"What do you think of you master now Nagini?" He hissed in Parseltongue, he waited but received no answer. He looked around and realized that Nagini was nowhere to be found. The spell must have destroyed her. This was a pity. He'd been very fond of that snake. Thinking about snakes caused his body to shift. Suddenly his senses were a great deal sharper. He flicked his serpentine tongue, tasting the frigid air of the fortress. Spying the mirror he realized that he'd changed into his Animagus form. He was a Basilisk. No where near the size of the one in the Chamber of Secrets, but still a considerable size. He shifted back to normal and smirked at his achievement.

There was a rapping on his door, interrupting his musings. "Enter!" He barked

Wormtail shuffled in nervously. The pathetic excuse for a man crawled over to the Dark Lord and kissed the hem of his robes. He then stood up and started shaking like the coward he was.

“What have you to report Wormtail?” Asked Voldemort

“The Weasley boy found me master.” Gulped the rat “He put me under the Cruciatus, made me take the unbreakable vow. Told me that he’d meet you at the conference.”

“Did he now?” Said Voldemort “Excellent Wormtail, you no longer need to maintain a watch at their residence.”

“Thank you master.” Said Petigrew, bowing once again, before hurriedly leaving the room.

Voldemort smiled wickedly at his counterpart’s audacity. The upstart really thought he was calling the shots. It would be interesting to see how he fared against a more powerful foe. For now Voldemort had to plan his attack on the conference. He also had to meet with the other Dark Lords as well as Henry. He was still unable to breach the wards around the corridor at the bottom of the fortress. However, he knew that Potter knew the secret to bypassing them.

...

Draco Malfoy was stirred out of his sleep by the sound of something clicking. He opened his eyes, just in time to see the point of a double barreled shotgun. An old muggle with dingy silver hair, wearing a tattered white t-shirt and dingy black jeans held the gun. He looked to be in his early sixties and had rotting teeth.

“I told you goddamn hippies to stay the hell off my lawn!” Said the man in a thick southern-American accent. “You got two seconds to git!”

Draco wasted no time in scrambling to his feet. No sooner had he done this, the man fired off a shot, hitting the ground where he’d been sleeping. Draco continued to run from the deranged man. He heard a few more shots in the distance. One of them hit him in his right calf. He stumbled and fell to the ground clutching his leg. The Muggle stalked toward him, cocking the gun for one final shot. Draco wasted no more time; he withdrew his wand from its wrist holster and shot

the Killing Curse at the man. It hit him square in the chest, causing him to collapse to the ground, dead.

Draco had been on the run for the past two weeks. He'd been at that dreaded ritual performed by Voldemort. When the Dark Lord had turned on his followers, Draco had been the only smart one, he'd simply apparated. The problem was he did so without a destination firmly in mind. This, along with the unstable magic in the air, had caused him to apparate clear across the Atlantic Ocean. All he knew was that he was now in the southern portion of the United States. He was so unfamiliar with muggle customs that he stuck out like a sore thumb. His father hadn't deemed it prudent that he learn the intricacies of Muggle society. This meant that he had to scrounge on the streets like a common hobo.

The last two weeks he'd had to shed his pride, as well as every preconceived notion regarding Muggles. He couldn't find any wizard establishment, and he didn't really know the protocol for American wizards anyway. Now he was injured. His leg had a sizable chunk missing, thanks to the hit it had taken.

There were a series of 'pops' around him. He looked around to see a group of people appear. They didn't look like any wizards Draco had ever seen though. They wore black body armor over blue shirts. They also wore blue pants. On the back of their body armor, in white was printed, M.D.F.B.I. They spotted Draco and came running over to him. One of them held up a black box to his mouth and spoke into it.

"We've found the target." He said "Caucasian male, late teens, light blonde hair, blue eyes."

Soon Draco was completely surrounded by the strange wizards. They all had their wands drawn, and trained on him.

"On your feet!" Barked one "Drop your wand and put your hands in the air."

Draco immediately complied. The next thing he knew, he was being hoisted up by two of the men. His injured leg was jarred and he cried out in pain.

"He's got an injury captain." Said one of the men.

"Take him to the med unit." Said the captain "Alright men spread out and make sure no citizens saw what happened. If they did Obliviate them."

"Sir, yes sir!" Chorused the remaining men. Draco didn't see anymore because the next thing he knew someone put their wand to his back and said "Stupify."

...

Darkness was all she saw. It was all she had seen for quite some time. She heard things though. Not many of them made much sense. Wings flapping, clinking of some kind of glass, a fire crackling and sometimes an eerie song, much like that of a phoenix, only different. She also felt things. Someone pouring something down her throat, lying on something soft, a feathery thing nuzzling her cheek and last but not least, pain. It was all over her body, but most of all at her throat and just below her chest. Thankfully she only felt it when she heard things, but that was enough.

The darkness suddenly went away as her eyes started to open. There was only a dull light in the room she was in. It was a small room. There was only a bed and a small table. Potion vials were laid on the table, and she assumed that they were used to treat her. That would explain the clinking glass, as well as the awful taste in her mouth. She slowly moved her hands up to her throat; it was still hurting very badly. The first thing she noticed was the vivid lines across her arm. They were where Voldemort had cut her. She checked her other arm, doing her best to ignore the Dark Mark, and saw that it too still bore the scars. Finally reaching her throat, she saw that it was heavily bandaged.

She noticed something black in the corner of the room. It was perched on a niche off the wall. The bird must have sensed her looking at it. It opened its eyes to reveal a pair of brilliant green orbs. The bird trilled in greeting. She recognized the sound as the one she'd heard before. The bird flew over to her and landed beside her

on the bed. It cocked its head to the side as if surveying her. This also allowed her to get a good look at the bird. It was roughly the size of a swan, and it was covered in black feathers and had a black beak and feet to match. Its build was similar to Fawkes, making her think that it was a phoenix.

The door to her room suddenly opened. A man in who looked to be in his early thirties walked in. He had dirty blonde hair that came down past his shoulders. He had a neatly trimmed beard and mustache as well. His eyes were brown and radiated kindness and wisdom within them.

"I see you're awake." He said in a deep throaty voice.

Ginny tried to answer him, but all that came out was a strangled gurgling noise. The effort to speak also caused more pain in her throat.

"You'll be like that for a while yet." Said the man "You had a real bad number done on you."

"If only you knew." She thought somberly. The last thing she remembered was Voldemort chanting an incantation to take her magic away. That was enough to piece together what had happened though. The only question she had was how had she survived?

"Your condition is odd though." Said the man "We've been giving you potions that should have healed those wounds, but it doesn't seem to have worked that well. I know a muggle like you hardly has any idea what I'm talking about though."

"Muggle?" She thought "Why would he think she was a Muggle?"

"Your core is gone" Said a voice inside her head. It sounded male; this put her on guard immediately. Foreign voices inside one's head could only lead to trouble

"Who said that?" She asked suspiciously

Her only answer was the phoenix chirping. Not understanding this she quarried the foreign voice again.

“Who said that?” She all but roared.

The phoenix winced at the volume of her voice and nuzzled her cheek in acknowledgement. She finally caught on that it was the bird who had spoken to her.

“You can talk?” She asked

“Only to you” He said

The man watched the exchange curiously.

“You have bonded with a phoenix?” He asked

Not knowing what else to do, Ginny nodded.

“But Muggles can’t bond with phoenixes.” Said the man “At least not that I’m aware of.”

Ginny sent him an angry glare. She was NOT a Muggle.

Seeing her expression the man asked “Are you a witch?” Ginny nodded “Then why don’t you have any magic in you?”

Ginny gave him a look that clearly said “How do you expect me to answer that if I can’t talk?”

“Right you can’t talk.” Said the man

“Obviously.” Thought Ginny

“There are ways around this.” He stooped down to her eye level and looked her in the eye. Ginny felt something touch her mind and heard the man’s voice again.

“Now what is your name?” He asked

"Ginevra Weasley." Answered Ginny mentally "But please call me Ginny."

"Well Ginny, I'll assume that the mark on your left arm isn't a tattoo as I had first thought." Said the man "So tell me, how did you come to bare the Dark Mark. You don't seem like a Death Eater to me."

"It was put there by force." Said Ginny "Who are you?" She asked

"My name is Nicholas Flamel." Said the man "Perhaps you've heard of me?"

"I thought you were dead." Said Ginny "Dumbledore destroyed the Philosopher's Stone."

"No, no." Said Flamel "Albus only thought he destroyed the stone, the one he took from me was a fake."

"How long have I been here?" She asked

"About two weeks." Said Flamel "Your phoenix brought you here, I'm still not sure how he found us, but on New Year's Eve he flamed in here and dropped you right in our living room."

"Our?" She asked

"My wife Paranelle and I." Said Flamel "We live here, in our cottage."

"Where is 'here'?" Asked Ginny

"Just a small plot of land in the Alps." Said Nicholas "We like to keep to ourselves. Now I need to figure out what happened to you, that way I can better treat you. If you'll allow me to, I'll perform a Legilimancy scan on you."

"Alright." Said Ginny "Just don't look at anything that doesn't concern you."

"Don't worry my dear." Said Flamel "I know what I'm looking for." He started sifting through her most recent memories. Soon he came to

the ones involving the ritual. As he looked at them, Ginny relived them, every slash from Voldemort's knife, every component of the ritual, right down to the end where Voldemort had slit her throat."

"Hmm." Said Flamel "I see we have a serious problem on our hands."

"Problem?" Asked Ginny

"Yes." Said Flamel "I don't know what happened to your magic, but young Tom didn't get it. It disappeared. He also carved several runes into your skin. Their purpose was to turn you into a magical container. They seem to be reacting with what little remained of your core. It's like you have a black hole inside you."

"What does that mean?" She asked, although she knew part of the answer already.

"It means..." Said Flamel "...that you don't have any magic within you, besides the bare minimum needed to sustain life. The other problem we run into is that your core is absorbing that magic. If you don't get an infusion of some kind of magic soon, you'll die."

"How do I get that magic?" Asked Ginny

"I'm not sure." Said Flamel "There are many ways you could get it, but they either involve complex potions, which I don't have the ingredients to make, or dangerous methods."

The phoenix chose this moment to fly into the air and thrust a wing towards Ginny. A bolt of red energy came out and struck her in the chest. It tingled slightly when it hit her. The energy was absorbed into her skin, the pain in her abdomen lessened as a result.

"Fascinating." Said Flamel, putting his hand under his chin and scratching his beard thoughtfully "That was a stunning spell, odd that a phoenix can cast it, even odder that you absorbed it."

This was all a bit too much to bare. First she was most likely scarred for life. She had yet to look in mirror, but she knew that there were scars all over her body. Next she found out that she could no longer

use magic and now she found out that she had to keep absorbing magic or die. She shook her head to clear it, but it didn't work. Thoughts and questions kept reverberating through her mind. What was she going to do now? How was she going to live without magic? Was there a way to reverse it? She was going to kill Tom the next chance she got. How was she going to kill him without magic? Could she absorb any spell? On and on the questions went, until she fell back onto the bed. She was still far too tired to think about these things right now.

"Sleep" Said a voice in her head, and then she did just that.

...

Ron Weasley, or someone who appeared to be Ron Weasley, shifted through the store room of Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes. The Dastardly Duo, also known as Fred and George, had him taking inventory. Normally he'd never subject himself to such a menial task; however, right now he was looking for something important. Most of the twins' inventions were useless to him, even their so called 'serious line.' He knew spells that could do anything most of their products could. There was one thing though, that he couldn't do. It was impressive that the twins had managed to come up with something so ingenious.

He sifted through a barrel of random products. "Ton-Tongue Toffees...rubbish, Extendable Ears...useless, Play-Wizard Fold out...interesting, but useless. Instant Darkness powder...not what I'm looking for, but it could come in handy." He pocketed this and kept looking "Spider Sponges...what the bloody hell those do? Finally, Gas Caps." He took a pack of the Gas Caps and pocketed them. These handy little devices could hold any liquid or gas, up to three hundred gallons worth. All he needed now was to fill a few of them with what he wanted.

"Oy! Ron!" Called one of the twins, George if he wasn't mistaken "You done down there?"

"Almost!" Called back 'Ron' "You blokes have a lot of stuff down here."

“Just leave it.” Called Fred “We’ve got a meeting to get to.”

“Right.” Answered ‘Ron’

Together the three Weasley Boys apparated to Number Twelve Grimmauld Place. Once there they saw the remainder of the Order of the Phoenix waiting for them. Riddle smirked internally at the thought of the once prestigious group. They’d lost quite a few members during the Azkaban Raid. Now they were little more than civilians with wands. They had no structure, and Minerva couldn’t lead her way out of a wet paper bag. It didn’t matter much now though. Most of them were going to die during the conference. For now he just had to put up with them a little bit longer.

Riddle noticed Remus glaring at him from the corner. He supposed that the werewolf could sense dark magic at work, him being a dark creature and all. Riddle had been disappointed to learn that he’d survived the battle at Azkaban. It would make sense though; he had a good knowledge of Defense Against the Dark Arts. Riddle resolved to make his death slow and painful, mostly because the half breed annoyed him to no end. That and he was also too suspicious of him. More than once he’d almost blown his cover. He’d question him about the minutest detail of Ron’s life, or his relationship with Harry or Hermione. While Riddle had access to all those memories, Weasley’s mind wasn’t the most organized of things. It always took him ages to figure out the correct answer to the question. Or he’d avoid answering it altogether. This only serve to arouse further suspicion from the werewolf. He was thankful that he’d already taken care of Moody; he would have figured him out a long time ago.

“I will now call this meeting to order!” Yelled McGonagall over the murmuring members “As we discussed at our last meeting, The international conference between the Muggle and Wizard governments takes place in two days. We have strong reason to believe that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named will attack the conference.”

“And they still can’t say Voldemort.” Said Riddle mentally while laughing

“There will be heavy security during this conference.” Continued McGonagall “Trained professionals to combat any outside forces who may try to ambush the government officials. The Order had originally planned on attending this conference, however, without Dumbledore; our organization has lost a great deal of credibility. They do not think me a capable leader.”

There were some protests at this, but they were silenced by McGonagall firing sparks into the air accompanied by a loud ‘bang’.

“I appreciate your high opinion of me.” Said Minerva “But I’m afraid I must agree with them. I am not Dumbledore; I do not know how to head the war effort. This is why I am disbanding the Order.”

There were more protests and screams of outrage at this declaration. Most being from the older members. Most of the logical thinkers could see her reasoning though. Riddle was laughing manically inside his head. This was just too funny. The great Minerva ‘I can do anything better than you can’ McGonagall was going to quit.

Minerva drew their attention once more and all heads turned back toward her. “I am not saying that we shouldn’t all do our parts in aiding the war effort. I’m only saying that The Order is being counter productive in that area. We all have our places in the community and we all have our own opinions. We don’t have anyone suitable to be a leader, therefore we are no better than a pack of hooligans, stepping on each others toes and going at things ill-equipped. We would be better off doing everything we could individually.”

Riddle had now heard enough. He had planned on getting rid of them during the conference, but now that they weren’t going to be there. Now seemed as good of a time as any. He stood up and cleared his throat, one hand in his pocket.

“Professor.” He said in his best respectful tone. “I respect your decision. We aren’t really doing anything worthwhile by having these meetings. I however have a solution to everyone’s worries.”

“Oh really?” Asked Remus sarcastically “And what would that be?”

“I’m glade you asked Moony!” Said Riddle cheerfully “My solution is this!” He withdrew the darkness powder and threw it into the middle of the table. Immediately the room was plunged into darkness. Riddle started firing Incendio spells, explosion hexes and most importantly, Killing Curses. There were screams of horror and outrage, but it took everyone about a minute and a half to regain their composure. When someone finally started to cast spells in Riddle’s general direction he simply apparated away.

...

Remus cursed when he saw Ron throw the darkness powder. He immediately grabbed Tonks and moved from his position. It was a good thing he had too. His area was the first place that Ron had sent his curses. He could hear and smell fire burning around the room, but due to the magical effect of the darkness powder, he couldn’t see where it was. All around him he heard people dropping to the floor, most likely dead. He started sending curses into the direction where Ron had been. Soon others started firing curses as well; unfortunately they were just firing at random, and hitting each other. Soon the darkness powder dissipated.

When the room was visible again, Remus saw that the fire had spread throughout the rest of the room, and was now going through the rest of the house. He looked around at the remaining members of the order. There was only Shacklebolt, Tonks, himself, Fred, George and Bill. Bill was cradling the dead body of his wife in his arms. McGonagall was sprawled out near the head of the table. Various other members had either been hit with the Avada Kadavra, or they’d been killed by one of the explosion curses. Remus let go of Tonks and started looking for a way out of the room. He gave up on this, and simply settled on apparating. He was shocked when this didn’t work. He tried again; as did Tonks and the other remaining wizards, but it was useless.

“How does that boy know wards?” Roared Shacklebolt

“That’s not important now!” Yelled Remus “We need to get out of here.” He started conjuring water to douse the fire. It was helping some, but the blaze had already grown out of control. They managed

to fight their way through the fire and out into the entrance hall. They found the front door had been collapsed. They headed toward the kitchen, where the back door was located. Once there they found another blazing fire, and another blocked exit.

“Head up!” Yelled Remus. He knew there was a secret exit out of the library, so he led the group there. The blaze wasn’t as bad on the top floor, but it was slowly getting worse. Pushing open the thick oak double doors, they found the library almost completely devoid of books. They also found Ron standing in front of the remaining occupied shelf. He had a bag in hand. He shrunk the books with one wave of his wand, then they all fell into the bag.

“You!” Yelled Bill “You killed Fluer! You killed our child! I’ll never forgive you for that!” He charged at Ron, firing the darkest curses he knew. Ron easily dodged them and sent a cutting hex back at his brother. The spell hit Bill right in the stomach, he collapsed to the floor holding his bleeding abdomen with both hands.

“Tsk, tsk, tsk.” Said Ron mockingly smacking his teeth “I expected better from a world renowned curse breaker. I’m surprised you all survived, although it was a spur of the moment plan, so I suppose I’m lucky that it was just you. If you came here for the secret exit Remus, I’m afraid it’s collapsed as well.” He dodged a barrage of curses sent his way by the assembled group, while he lazily batted others aside with his wand. He fired a few Killing Curses back at them, they dispersed in order to dodge them, giving Ron his chance to escape. “I hope burning to death doesn’t hurt too much, on second thought I hope it hurts a lot. Compliments on the darkness powder boys!” With that he apparated right through his own wards.

Remus didn’t want to take Ron’s word about the exit. He went over to a statue depicting a serpent coiled around a column. He tried to spin it, but it wouldn’t budge. He realized that Ron had been telling the truth about the exit. The fire was now starting to spread up the walls. Remus thought quickly and fired a Reductor Curse at the wall. It blasted a hole right through it. Now the hazy afternoon sky could be seen, as well as the seedy London neighborhood around the house.

“We’re going to have to jump!” Yelled Remus over the noise of the fire. He conjured some bandages around Bill’s abdomen and hoisted the younger man onto his shoulders. He took a running leap and jumped out of the hole. He fired a series of cushioning charms at the ground to break his fall. He landed on his feet and turned to look at the hole. The twins came out next, followed by Tonks, and finally Shacklebolt. They all apparated away from the burning mansion, and to St. Mungo’s.

After admitting Bill into the emergency ward at the hospital the five remaining Order members had an impromptu meeting in the waiting room.

“I just have one thing to ask.” Said George “What the effing hell is going on here!”

“My sentiments exactly George.” Said Fred “First Harry, then Ginny and now Ron.”

“I think you’ve got it wrong.” Said Remus “Ron was the one who told us that Harry and Ginny were both dark, when it turned out that he was the traitor.”

“But we saw Ginny cast the Killing Curse at him.” Said Fred

“Wait, remember what she said Fred?” Asked George to his brother. “She said that we didn’t understand. She was trying to tell us about Ron, but we wouldn’t listen, we saw the mark on her arm, and the wand in her hand...”

“...and we jumped to conclusions.” Finished Fred “Bloody hell. We told her she was no longer a part of the family, and that we never wanted to see her again.”

“And you probably won’t.” Said Tonks “Auror tracking can’t pick up her magical signature anywhere. She could be under some wards, but it’s unlikely.”

“If they can’t pick up her core that means...” Started Fred

“...She’s dead.” Finished George somberly “Damn it, why couldn’t we have listened?” He punched the wall, making a hole in the plaster. This was a testament to how angry he was at himself, the wall was made of solid stone. His hand was most likely severely broken, but he didn’t show any signs of feeling it.

“Beating yourselves up over it won’t help anyone.” Said Remus “I don’t think you all understand what we’re dealing with. I noticed something in Ron’s eyes right before he threw the powder, I saw it before when we had our confrontation a few weeks ago. His eyes were purple, and sometimes they turned red. He’d been acting really weird too.”

“So what do you think is going on Remus?” Asked Tonks

“It’s a very far fetched theory.” Began the werewolf in his scholarly tone “Harry asked me not to mention this to anyone, but I think you all need to know, since Harry isn’t here to deal with it. How many of you know what Horcruxes are?”

The only person who knew what they were, was Tonks. “I’ve heard of them.” She said “Their supposed to be impossible to make though. Everything written about them is only theory, and even that is in some pretty dark books.”

“Well for those of you who don’t know.” Continued Remus “A Horcrux is a piece of a person’s soul, bound to an object. Dumbledore found that Voldemort made several of them.”

“Several?” Asked a confused Tonks “How’d the wanker manage that?”

“Merlin only knows.” Said Remus “To make a long story short, these Horcruxes are what Harry was looking for, before he disappeared.”

“So you really don’t think he’s dead?” Asked George coming out of his daze and focusing back on the conversation. He was now cradling his injured hand gingerly.

"No I don't." Said Remus "If he were dead, Voldemort would have shouted it to the heavens. You all know the prophecy, if Harry was out of the picture altogether, Voldemort wouldn't be nearly as careful as he's being."

"What do the Horcruxes have to do with Weasley?" Asked Shacklebolt

"I'm getting to that." Said Remus "It was after they'd come back from their trip to Hogwarts that I first noticed something off about Ron. He wreaked of dark magic, I mentioned this to Harry, and he told me that Ron had been bitten by a weird snake inside the Chamber of Secrets. They performed tests for poison and magical residue, but it came out that only a little blood had been taken out of him. It's my theory that they missed something, something very important. Ron isn't himself anymore, exactly what's inside him I don't know, but I can hazard an educated guess."

"And that is...?" Asked Kingsley

"Voldemort." Said Remus "It's the only way I can think of for him to have such a grasp on magic. He managed to kill Moody and half the Auror Division, Molly, Arthur and Charlie too. Now he's taken out most of the order, and I shudder to think about what he was doing in Azkaban."

"So You-know- I mean Voldemort is controlling Ron?" Asked Fred

"Not the same Voldemort we've been fighting against." Said Remus "One of the Horcruxes has him."

"Is that even possible?" Asked Kingsley

"Afraid so." Said Remus "One possessed Ginny for almost a whole year when she was eleven."

"The diary was one wasn't it." Said George, not really asking a question

“Yes it was.” Said Remus “Now, whatever was in the chamber has a hold on Ron, but it’s a lot stronger than what Ginny was under. Ron is like a totally different person now.”

“How do we stop him then?” Asked Tonks “And what are we going to do now?”

“I don’t know Tonks.” Said Remus “I just don’t know.”

“Why don’t we ask Dumbledore?” Suggested George “Someone should tell him about this, he’d want to know.”

“That’s about all we can do now.” Said Remus “I’ll do it, you two should stay with your brother. Tonks, Kingsley, you’re welcome to come with me if you want.”

“I need to head back to the Ministry.” Said Kingsley “Come to my office when you’re done Tonks, we’ve got a lot to talk about.”

“Yes sir.” Tonks said to her superior. The other Auror disappeared. Tonks and Remus followed shortly after, heading for the gates of Hogwarts.

...

Minutes later, found Remus and Tonks at the thick wooden doors outside of Hogwarts’ entrance hall. Remus pounded the door, sure that someone had to be in the school. After several minutes, the door finally was opened by a panting Professor Flitwick.

“Miss Tonks, Mr. Lupin? What brings you here? And where is Minerva?” Said Flitwick in greeting.

“That’s why we’re here.” Said Remus “You should gather everyone into the Head’s office. We’ve got a lot to talk about.”

“Yes, I understand.” Said Flitwick “The password is Speckled Kitty.”

Remus nodded and headed toward the Headmaster’s office with Tonks in toe. Once there they made their way up the spiral staircase.

The portraits all started looking at them when they came in. One in particular though, had its undivided focus on the pair.

“Remus, Nymphidora?” Questioned Dumbledore’s portrait “Where is Minerva?”

“I think I’ll wait for the others to get here, if you don’t mind Albus.” Said Remus.

“As you wish dear boy.” Said the portrait.

Soon enough, all the remaining professors were assembled inside the Headmaster’s office.

“Well, I’m sure you all know that McGonagall was heading the Order.”

“We figured as much.” Said Professor Sprout “Although none of us were members, we did know about the Order, thanks to Albus there.”

“Yes, well at the last meeting, something happened.” Said Remus “Someone betrayed us.”

“Again!” Squeaked Flitwick incredulously

“Afraid so.” Said Remus “Caught us with our guard down, only Tonks, me, the Weasley twins, Bill and Kingsley are left.”

“You don’t mean...?” Asked Professor Sinestra leaving the question hanging.

Remus nodded, at this Hagrid stood up from his three assembled chairs and roared at the top of his lungs, which turned out to be very loud. “Who did it? I’ll rip ‘em ter shreds with me bare ‘ands!”

“You won’t be so eager to do that when you hear who it was.” Said Tonks morbidly, at everyone’s quizzical looks she continued “It was Ron.”

This emitted gasps from everyone, and a choking like sound from Hagrid.

"Are you certain that-..." Started Dumbledore, but Remus cut him off.

"Don't ask us if we're certain it was Ron." Said Remus "I wouldn't be here telling you this if I wasn't sure."

"You of all people should know the dangers of accusing too quickly Remus." Said Dumbledore "Or have you forgotten about Sirius."

Remus fought with all his self control to keep himself from grabbing the portrait, ripping it from the wall and breaking it over his knee. "Sirius and Ron are two very different cases, I saw exactly what happen today. Ron got up, threw a bag of darkness powder onto the table, and started throwing every lethal curse in the book around the room. He put up apparation wards and set the house on fire, then he blocked all the exits. This he did in about two minutes, he also managed to clear out the entire library at Grimauld Place."

"indeed it is true." Said Dumbledore "You can say the name of headquarters, this means that Minerva is dead."

"What do we do now?" Asked Professor Sinestra

"I see death and destruction for the entire planet." Said Traylawny airily.

"That's nice dear." Said Professor Sprout patronizingly, no one else commented on the Divination Teacher's prediction.

"To answer your question Sabrina." Said Dumbledore "You all must rally the Wizarding World of Britain. Voldemort will try to take Hogwarts, and I fear he will try very soon. This cannot be allowed to happen. You must call to the people, ask them to protect the place they all once called home, it is the only way."

"What about the Order, and the conference?" Asked Tonks

"I believe Miss Tonks, that you know about Sixty-Eight people that are handling that affair." Said Dumbledore "There are also One or Two people that will be contacting you soon. For the rest of you, I can

assure you that the Ministries will do a far better job of securing the conference than you could.”

The assembled group then got down to planning out who was to do what. Each person had people that they could turn to for assistance in spreading the call for the defense of Hogwarts as well as the other major Wizarding places throughout Britain. Hagrid took the many magical creatures in the forest. In the end only the Thestrals and Hippogriffs agreed to defend the castle itself. The other creatures would only aid in defending the forest. When Bill and the Twins arrived at Hogwarts a few hours later, Bill was sent to beseech the goblins for help in fighting Voldemort. The Twins returned to their shop and began mass production of various magical weapons. Tonks returned to the Ministry to prepare for the conference. The remaining professors and Remus got to work on securing the castles’ many entrances. With Remus’ intricate knowledge of the school being put to good use.

Over the next two days, people started showing up at the school. Students of present and past came to the school to lend a hand and show their support for the war against Voldemort. It was amazing how quickly word had spread. Remus had the forethought to use the Sorting Hat as a way to root out ill intentioned volunteers. So far they’d caught a few people trying to sabotage their efforts. Most however were sincere.

On the third day, everyone was gathered in the Great Hall. There were already about two hundred people gathered in the castle, with more coming all the time. Today was the day of the conference, and everyone was anxious about what would happen. The Visual Wizarding Wireless was projected on a screen for all to see. It currently showed a room full of men and women in smart suits. Throughout the room though, there were people dressed in the finest dress robes galleons could buy. The latter were obviously Wizarding officials. Although it wasn’t showed on the screen, the room was crawling with both magical and Muggle security teams. The building itself was built like a bomb shelter. It also had enough wards on it to make even Hogwarts seem easy to break into.

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It was still an hour and a half before the conference itself actually started. Right now a large group of figures, all wearing black robes with hoods drawn over them, stood in a hidden room inside the conference building. One figure strode to the front of the crowd and turned to address its associates.

“My fellow Unspeakables.” Said the figure “As you all may have guessed, I am #2, and we all know why we are here. It is my hope that were are not needed, however, past experience dictates we be cautions. There is no guarantee that the information given to us by #34 is 100 accurate. I do not distrust #34, but Voldemort could very well be aware of his identity and be playing us for fools. This being said, I say again that the risk is too great for us not to act. You all know your assignments. I expect you to do your job, should the need arise. Dismissed!”

With the last order the assembled group silently swept out of the room and into their assigned stations around and outside the building. Soon after the conference was underway.

...

A smartly dressed man went before the assembled group of government officials. He was wearing an all black suit with a white shirt and black tie. He looked like a typical politician. Brown graying hair, about fifty-three years old and slightly pudgy. He wore thin wire spectacles and carried a stack of papers, which he placed in front of him at the podium. He looked at his audience and began to speak.

“Good Afternoon.” He began in a thick Russian accent. “I would like to call this joint session of the United Nations and The International Council of Magic into order. For those of who don’t know me, my name is Arnold Rhiskoven, and I am the chairman of the United Nations. Please allow me to introduce the other officiator for this meeting; Supreme Mugwomp of the International Council of Magic, Marick Amvesugio.”

A tall man wearing black silk robes with golden trim strode onto the stage. He was a dark skinned man, He looked to be about eighty, but

he was actually one-hundred-and-thirteen. The man raised a wand to his throat and began to speak after casting the Sonarus Charm.

“First of all I would like to address the Non-magical community.” Began Amvesugio “This may come as quite a shock to you all, but magic is real, it is around you everyday, but you do not see it. This is for your protection as well as our own. We did not want you to fear magic, so we kept it a secret, from all but those of you who needed to know. Now though we have run into a problem. Not all wizards share the same views. Some feel that they are superior to anyone who isn’t a magical person. It is these people who would seek to destroy all that you and we hold dear. It is these people that threaten the lives of everyone assembled in this room and everyone watching throughout the world. We the Wizarding Community are doing our best to fight these menaces, but it won’t be enough. These people aren’t just attacking us, they are attacking you as well. It is their goal to turn our two worlds against each other. Again this cannot be allowed to happen. Such a thing would be catastrophic for the entire world. This is why we are here today asking the non-magical community for help.”

There were a slew of questions coming from all over the room. Amvesugio answered them as best he could, and the meeting continued this way for some time. There were comments from almost every official there, it didn’t look like they were going to resolve anything in the near future. The Muggle governments were blaming the Wizarding ones for creating the Dark Lords, while the Wizarding governments defended themselves by using examples of Muggles who challenged their governments and their governments not being held accountable for them, people had a choice to do as they pleased, and some did it better than others. It was an endless cycle with no real end in sight.

...

Voldemort looked at his assembled group of Death Eaters. They were all in the desert surrounding Cairo. There were about three hundred of them in all, there were also about four hundred Dementors awaiting his call to descend on the conference. Little did the many curse breakers know, Voldemort had had one of them under the

Imperious Curse. He'd instructed his charge to key the wards into himself. He now had complete control over them, and knew exactly how to use them. No one would be escaping his wrath on this day.

"Death Eaters, we go!" He ordered. There was a resounding cheer from his minions as they marched toward their destination. Along the way they ran across several people, both wizard and Muggle. None survived. Soon the city was ablaze with spell and gun fire. The Death Eaters marched on uniformly. Voldemort had a powerful barrier protecting all of his followers from the spells cast by the enemy wizards. The gun fire wasn't a problem, as a simple shield charm could deflect bullets. The Death Eaters completed a full circuit of the city before heading toward the conference building. Voldemort could feel the many wizards within trying to break the wards, but it was useless. Voldemort instructed his Death Eaters to press the attack from the outside. He apparated right onto the stage, where the meeting was still taking place.

"...As I said the magical community does not..." Scringour, the Magical Minister of England was saying, before he saw Voldemort appear before the amassed people.

As soon as the Dark Lord appeared. Several people appeared out of nowhere. A massive surge of green light was shot toward him, as was a considerable amount of bullets. He simply let his power surge to the surface, sending all the spells and fire back where they came from. There were several thumps as well as screams upon seeing so much death with one action.

"Hello world." Said Voldemort into the cameras "I thought that today would be the perfect opportunity to introduce you to your new ruler. After today all of your leaders will be dead." To emphasize his point, he waved his wand in an arch. A massive green light shot out of his wand, the green light washed over about forty people, killing them all instantly. A group of black robed figures entered the room. They looked around as if expecting to see something, but that something wasn't there.

"Ah, the Unspeakables." Said Voldemort. "I'm afraid you're comrades have their hands full with my Death Eaters, but if you really want to

have something to do.” He snapped a thin finger. Hundreds of Dementors appeared inside the room. The immediately started attacking the unsuspecting Muggles and the terrified wizards. “As I was saying.” Said Voldemort to the camera “All of you filthy Mud Bloods will die. I am starting a new world order, where wizards rule, I will give your pathetic governments time to prepare for me. You have one year, after that, all you know will be destroyed. So without further ado...” He trailed off as he sensed something in the air. He’d felt it for a while, but now it was stronger.

He was about to speak again, but found he couldn’t. He tried to move, and again he found his body unresponsive.

“Having trouble Tom?” Asked a voice beside him. “A figure appeared in front of him. He had bright red hair and purple yes. “It appears once again you underestimate me. I told you we’d meet here, or didn’t Wormtail give you my message?”

Riddle walked in front of his counterpart and looked him over. “Looks like you got some of our soul back, good. Now for the rest of it, we’re using this body, since it’s younger and in better condition than that thing.” He jabbed a finger at Voldemort’s chest “Hold still, this may hurt a lot.” He placed a hand on Voldemort’s chest and started to reach out his magic. Soon both men were screaming in pain as their minds and bodies were forced into one. A bright red light enveloped them for several moments. Soon it died down and one figure stood where two had been. The being was male, looked to be in his late twenties, He had raven black hair, except at the tips, those were a deep ruby red. He was tall, and moderately built. His skin was pale, but not the unearthly pale that Voldemort’s had been. He wore all black robes. His eyes were a cold blue, tinged with red on the outside. The man laughed and looked at the camera once again.

“Congratulations.” He said in a deep yet velvety voice. “You have all witnessed the birth of a god.” With that he waved one hand, everyone in the room was hit with a green light, even the Dementors. The light incinerated everything it touched and left nothing but dust behind. Voldemort surveyed himself in a conjured mirror, he liked what he saw. He no longer felt like he was in a half existence. For the first time in years he felt whole.

...

Harry shot out of sleep for the second time that week. His scar was throbbing heavily. He couldn't see anything, he could only feel pain, anticipation and finally elation. He figured that these must be the feelings of the original Voldemort. If he was going to get visions from both of them, this could make things very confusing. The pain had been going on like that for the past week, and he was still none the wiser as to why it was going on. He'd thought about opening the connection to Voldemort more, but decided against it. That would give the Voldemort of this world an easier time at getting into his mind, and that was something he really didn't need.

He sighed and tried to get back to sleep. This would be his last night on the airship, so he wanted to get as much use out of a bed as he could. Once they started their Trek to the Iafa Tree there was no telling when they'd get to another town. Tomorrow he'd be in Icicle Inn, and he'd finally tell his friends about his vision from Kuja, he had the nastiest feeling that they'd all need to know very soon.

Closing his eyes he attempted once again to get into the realm of sleep. He managed it eventually, but his dreams were far from peaceful. He was greeted by visions of havoc and destruction all across Earth. Armies rampaged everywhere and only a few people were managing to survive. Harry kept telling himself that it was only a nightmare, but something told him that he was wrong.

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A/N: As I said at the end of the last chapter, this is the last time I go exclusively to the Wizarding World for a whole chapter, so those of you who don't like these chapters should be happy about that. Don't forget to review, it only takes a couple seconds, and if anyone insists on leaving a pointless flame, please sign it, or leave a way for me to contact you, I would like a chance to defend myself.

Winter War Land

A group of six figures walked silently along the icy landscape of northern Glacia. They were headed toward a large city. The city was known as Icicle Inn. It was the northernmost city in all of Temprus. The town was best known for its ski and snowboarding resorts, as well as its impressive hot springs. As they approached however, they didn't see the festive atmosphere they'd expected. Instead they saw several people in either black or blue uniforms. All the uniforms had the same logo on them, a yin-yang symbol surrounded by flames.

"What the hell?" Asked Harry "Aren't they SeeD?"

"Looks that way." Said Bastian "This could be a problem."

"We need a way to hide our faces." Said Andrea "As much as I hate to say it, we can't trust any of them."

"It looks like they're preparing for some sort of battle, or coming back from one." Said Sophia

There were several troops running in and out of various buildings. The various shops throughout the town seemed to have been taken over by the SeeDs. Several houses also seemed to be quartering the troops. The few townspeople that were out didn't look too thrilled either.

"I'm going to do a glamour charm on all of us." Said Harry "It's just an illusion, so don't freak out when you get a look at yourselves." He waved his hand past his own face, and repeated the gesture with everyone else. His hair turned into a platinum blonde color, his eyes went from emerald green, to a piercing blue. His face changed too. Now it had more square-like features. He did the same to Sheyna, whose eyes turned a darker shade of brown, and her hair changed from black to a dirty blond. Her face stayed mostly the same, the nose only growing slightly. Next was Ethan. Harry simply changed his skin and hair color. He looked totally different, with much lighter skin, red hair and a slimmer nose. Bastian got the reverse treatment. His skin darkened considerably and his hair went from pale blonde to black. Sophia's hair was turned red and her face was given its share

of freckles. Her skin also paled some. Andrea's hair went from blonde to silver; her eyes went from green to crimson. This dramatic change made her completely unrecognizable.

"Wow." Said Sheyna "You guys look a lot different."

"So do you." Said Bastian "How long will this last Harry?"

"Until I want it to go away." Said Harry "Or if someone casts a Finite Incantum on you, but since Kuja isn't near here, hopefully, we shouldn't find anyone else who can."

Harry had informed them of his latest visions before they started their journey. They'd all been very alarmed to learn of a person with power greater than Harry's or Grindlewald's opposing them, but it only served to strengthen their resolve to help him. Andrea had reasoned that Kuja was at least sorceress class in power, therefore it was her duty as a SeeD to make sure he failed in whatever he was attempting, Ethan had agreed with her, only adding that he couldn't let one of his newest friends face an enemy like that alone. Bastian and Sophia had voiced similar reasoning. Sheyna had simply said that she was with him for the long haul, as she'd told him many times before.

"So what's our plan?" Asked Harry "Once we get closer, they'll be able to tell we have GF."

"We could un-join." Suggested Ethan "Only until we get out of the city at least."

"We'll use the EFC terminals to get more money." Said Andrea "Then we'll restock on supplies and buy some materia, it's always good to have a backup."

"Hey I just thought of something." Said Harry "Did you and Ethan happen to find my materia and sword back in Lucca?"

"If we did, you'd have it." Said Andrea

"I figured." Said Harry downcast, he really wanted his sword back. The gunblade was a fine weapon, but it still didn't have the feel of the Sword of Gryffindor.

"Well Seth, how do I un-unction you?" Asked Harry

"Just concentrate on pushing me out." Said Seth "I'll appear as a stone in your hand."

Harry did so, and he felt Seth's presence shift in his mind. Just before he felt it leave altogether the guardian gave him one more word of warning.

"Don't forget to clear the fiends out of your mind, as soon as you start getting a headache, take care of it." With that he was out of Harry's head and his essence was within a pendant sized stone.

He noticed that Andre, Ethan, Sophia and Bastian all held similar stones. They stowed the stones in their pockets, and headed for the inn. It would take them some time to restock supplies, and they still didn't know what problems the SeeDs would cause them. Once inside one of the inns, they approached an elderly woman behind the desk.

"No vacancies." She said without looking up.

"None at all?" Asked Harry

"You heard me sonny." She said

"We've traveled a long way ma'am." Said Harry "We're willing to pay you a generous amount for a couple of rooms..."

"We're housing two Garden's worth of troops in this hotel." Said the lady "And there are four other Garden's worth scattered across the city, you'll be lucky to find a barn to sleep in."

"Oh this is just great." Said Sheyna sarcastically "We've walked for the last three days, and now we can't even find a decent place to sleep."

“Let’s head to the item shop.” Said Andrea “We can buy a couple of cottages, they aren’t the coziest of places, but they’ll be better than the ground.”

“We don’t have much of a choice.” Said Harry “I wonder why all these SeeDs are off of their Gardens.”

“They’re massing for something big.” Said Andrea “Right now they’re probably reassigning people to different Gardens, to balance the forces needed for each one. In a large battle like this they want all the Gardens at maximum efficiency.”

“Makes sense.” Said Harry “Really hinders our plans though.”

“Weren’t some of them Balamb SeeDs?” Asked Bastian

“Yes.” Said Ethan “And if Balamb Garden is here, then this must be a big operation.”

“This is probably why we couldn’t contact Bessaid Garden.” Said Andrea “They must be accepting only priority transmissions.”

“But we were sending priority transmissions.” Said Ethan

“We had to mask our frequency.” Said Andrea “The regular channels were being monitored by Baron. They probably did check for us on other frequencies every now and then, but the timing was probably always off.”

“Maybe.” Said Ethan “Something still doesn’t smell right though.”

They finally reached the item shop and walked inside. There were several SeeDs already present, they ignored them and picked out what they thought they’d need. Hi-Potions, Remedies, Ethers and various other medicinal vials were bought. They also picked up a few grenades and other non-magical weapons. After getting everything they needed, they headed to the counter.

“What account should I charge?” Asked the pudgy salesman behind the counter.

“Umm...” Said Harry, his eyes darting nervously around to all the assembled SeeDs

“Fingerprint.” Said the man. Harry stuck out his index finger and placed it on a pad proffered by the shopkeeper. There was an affirmative ‘beep’ after about five seconds.

“Looks like you’ve got plenty.” Said the man “What the hell did you kill to get so much Gil?”

“How much is in there?” Asked Harry

“Take a look.” Said the man turning the terminal screen so that Harry could see it.

The screen read: Client Number-33215691, Available Gil-3,192,643

“Wow.” Said Harry “Guess all that training paid off.”

“Looks like it.” Said Sheyna “That’s a lot of Gil.”

“This all you folks need?” Asked the shopkeeper

“For today.” Said Harry “We might be back though.”

“You’d better hurry then.” Said the man “Those Garden bastards are gonna clean out all my stock.”

“We’ll keep that in mind.” Said Andrea

Their next stop was the materia shop. They needed an alternative to Junctions if they were going to be in close proximity to SeeD. Again they found several SeeDs inside the shop.

“What the hell are they getting ready for?” Wondered Ethan

“Now’s not the time to worry about it.” Said Andrea “We aren’t really in a position to help, and like you said something doesn’t seem right.”

“How can I help you?” Asked the clerk cheerfully, or what appeared to be cheerfully. The young blond woman looked as though she’d been forcing a smile for the past week, and she probably had been.

“What have you got in stock?” Asked Sheyna, she being the expert on materia everyone thought it best to let her handle it.

“We’ve got standard stock.” Said the clerk “Ice, Lightning, Fire, Earth, Restore, Revive, Sense and Heal. Unfortunately we’re all out of enhancement materia.”

“Damn.” Said Sheyna “We’ll take five of each.” She said

They paid for their materia, and headed for the weapons shop. They needed to buy some bangles to equip their newly bought materia. They repeated the same process as the previous two shops. They were lucky to get what they’d been looking for. Had they tried to purchase offensive weapons, they would have been out of luck. To Sheyna’s disappointment the shop was also out of ammo.

“Damn SeeDs” Said Sheyna “No offense.” She added to Ethan and Andrea

“None taken.” Said Ethan “I’m starting to agree with you, I just wish I knew what they were doing here.”

“I have a feeling we’ll find out soon enough.” Said Harry “We didn’t see anything coming towards the city, we’re bound to run into whatever their doing if we keep heading west.”

“You’re probably right.” Said Sophia “But I wouldn’t call that a good thing.”

...

They returned to town the next morning after sleeping in the cottages they’d bought. They went into a store that sold winter clothing;

surprisingly this wasn't crawling with SeeDs. They bought some proper attire for the climate and started heading west out of town. Along the way they ran into some random fiends, but wasn't anything that they couldn't handle. The only problem they ran into came in the form of a pack of yeti.

There were five of the large apelike creatures. They howled and roared as they charged at the travelers. The first swung its giant ham fist at Harry. The wizard nimbly dodged it, then he countered with a vicious slash of his gunblade. This action took the monster's right forearm completely off. The yeti that went for Ethan didn't seem phased by the rod strikes, or the fire spells cast at it. It grabbed the struggling SeeD by the neck and slammed him hard onto the icy ground. Sheyna dispatched a third monster before it even got close to them. She fired one of her few remaining demolition shells straight into its head.

Andrea was dealing with a yeti of her own. It made to grab her as its companion had done to Ethan. She however, didn't allow this to happen. She sent her gunblade slicing cleanly through the creature's stomach disemboweling it. For good measure she sent a Fire spell at the beast. The small fireball burned the already dying monster causing it to howl in agony. Meanwhile Sophia and Bastian had the largest of the Yeti to deal with. It was roughly twice the size of the other four, making it around fourteen feet tall. When it stepped the ground seemed to shake. It swiped at Bastian with its humongous hand. The mercenary attempted to block the shot with his broadsword, unfortunately for him, this didn't turn out well. He was sent flying several feet away, where he landed with a thud and his sword stuck into the ground next to him.

Sophia fired spells at the beast, but nothing seemed to pierce its thick hide. Had they all been at their maximum junctions, these beasts wouldn't have been a problem, but if they used that type of magic, SeeD would pick it up and be all over them. Sophia channeled fire into her crossbow bolt, using her materia. She also added as much of her own magic as she could. When the yeti was done with Bastian it turned to face her. She let fly with a bolt that struck the creature square in the face. It didn't kill the beast, but it did effectively blind it.

Harry slashed at the now one-handed monster once again. He was using his own magic to increase his strength, just like he'd learned while 'training' under Grindlewald. The monster had learned from its first mistake though, and it was approaching its would be prey with extreme caution. Whenever Harry would strike at it, the yeti would dodge. Getting frustrated, Harry put all his power into leaping into the air. He came down with an overhead strike. His gunblade tore straight through the beast's skull and down through the torso. Satisfied that the monster was effectively dead, Harry went to aid Sophia, who he saw was having trouble with the blinded yeti.

Andrea and Sheyna raced toward the yeti that was still thrashing Ethan about. It now held the SeeD by one of his ankles and was twirling him around, or smashing him into the snow repeatedly. Sometimes it would slam him into its free hand, while drawing said hand back to increase the power of the blow. They could tell that Ethan was in bad shape, if he wasn't already dead. When they got close enough, Sheyna cast a Firaga spell on the yeti. Being a lot stronger than the normal Fire spells the beast was badly burned. It dropped Ethan and rounded on the two females. It let out a roar and was suddenly surrounded by a crimson aura.

"Uh oh." Said Andrea "It just used Mad Rush. That's Berserk, Haste, Regen and Protect all rolled into one."

"So it just got harder to kill then." Said Sheyna. She cast another Firaga, but this time the creature nimbly dodged it. She fired some bullets at it, but the protect spell caused them to bounce off harmlessly.

While Sheyna was distracting the creature, Andrea went over to Ethan. He wasn't dead, but he was close. He had several broken ribs, and his spine was jutting at an odd angle. A Curaga would fix him right up, but without junctions all she could use was the Restore Materia, and that wasn't acclimatized enough to use Curaga.

"This is gonna take a while." She muttered. She took out a phoenix down and let the crimson feathers touch the unconscious SeeD. Some of the more serious wounds started to heal and he began to stir. She cast a few Cure spells further healing him before pouring a

Hi-Potion down his throat. He shakily made it to his feet, still clutching his ribs.

“That hurt.” He said weakly

“Try to avoid doing it from now on then.” Said Andrea

They turned back to the battle, just in time to see the yeti slam Sheyna onto the ground. It then leapt into the air, its intentions to land on top of the downed woman. They watched in silent horror as the beast started to come back down. Their worries turned out to be unfounded. Sheyna gathered as much magic as she could and released a spell. The yellow Enemy Skill materia on her bangle glowed brightly as she touched it with her magic. As the creature came down she released it with a cry of “Beta!” A massive beam of red hot energy encompassed the beast, turning it to ash before it even hit the ground. Sheyna rolled out of the way to avoid the falling remains, wincing in pain from putting pressure on her cracked ribs. She staggered to her feet and cast a Curaga spell on herself. She then saw Ethan’s state and repeated the spell on him. They turned to check on their comrades and saw that Harry and Sophia were still dealing with the humongous yeti.

When Harry had joined the battle, Sophia was dodging the creature’s blind swings. Harry let fly with a barrage of cutting hexes, explosion curses and any other manner of spells that could damage the monster. Unfortunately nothing seemed to phase it. Harry remembered Grindewald telling him that some fiends were extremely resistant to all forms of magic, even Wizarding spells. This meant that he had to find another way to hurt the thing. He rushed forward and slashed at the monster’s tree-trunk-like legs. Even with a trigger pull, all he managed to do was make a shallow cut. This thing was extremely strong. Sophia was pelting it with magically charged bolts, but this only seemed to annoy it. It let out roar similar to its fallen comrades and went into Mad Rush.

Soon the damage done to its face was healed by the Regen aspect of the spell. It lunged at Harry, who didn’t have enough time to dodge. It punched the wizard in the gut, sending him flying several feet away. It then turned its attention to Sophia. The ex-SeeD tried to hit it in the

face again, but it blocked the blast with one of its massive hands. Sophia struck it with Thunder spells, but the creature seemed to laugh at her attempts to damage it. It let fly with a kick that lifted the woman off the ground. It then used its foot to slam her into the ground before bringing it down onto her legs, crushing them. She screamed in pain as her bones were crushed. The monster raised its foot, preparing to deliver a final blow.

The blow never came. The monster was hit from behind by a massive Flare spell. This burned a considerable portion of its fur and flesh away. Next it was hit by a sword slash through one of its legs. This caused it to topple to the ground. An angry Bastian jumped on top of the downed creature, using it as a leverage to jump higher into the air. He then gathered a ball of bluish-purple energy at the tip of his sword. "Energy Rain!" He yelled as he released the ball of energy. Before it struck the creature, the ball split into several smaller beams. The bore holes straight through the beast, and as they hit the ground underneath it they caused small explosions. The attack reached its end with one large explosion, finishing the gigantic fiend.

Harry lowered his hand from where he'd aimed it to cast the Flare spell. He'd been planning to follow the spell up with a few more, but Bastian had arrived and finished off the creature. He rushed over to Sophia who was whimpering on the ground. Her legs were completely crushed. Harry shuddered at the sight, but he'd been similarly injured several times, and he knew that a strong healing spell could fix her right up. He knelt down and placed his hands over her legs. He concentrated on the strongest Curaga he could cast. A pale green light encircled the damaged limbs, mending the shattered bone and repairing the torn skin. Soon enough Sophia was back to normal.

"That was close." Said Bastian "I thought it was gonna kill her."

"It would have." Said Harry "I think you all need to get used to not having junctions again. You have to fight a lot differently without them."

"You're right." Said Sophia "Thanks Harry, you saved my life again."

"I think we're even." Said Harry "We're in this together, so there's no need to keep score."

Andrea, Ethan and Sheyna made it to their position and looked at the charred remains of the huge yeti.

"That was a big one." Observed Ethan

"Let's get out of here before some more fiends come." Said Andrea
"They'll want to free meal we've given them."

They all agreed and continued their trek through the freezing terrain.

...

After a few hours of calm they made camp for nightfall. They pulled out their cottages and set them up. There were two in all, the men were in one while the ladies shared the other. They ate from the various canned foods that they'd stocked while in town, or brought with them from the airship. They'd sleep for the rest of the day before starting their trek again around midnight. They didn't want to sleep too long during the dark hours, as it got very cold. So it continued, ten hour hikes right after breakfast, then stopping for a break and a meal for another three hours, then starting another eight to ten hour trek, before bedding down for the night. Fiend fighting was also randomly thrown into the mix. They hadn't run into any more yetis, but they'd fought their fare share of monsters.

During their trek, they'd seen many a SeeD transport vessel. The crafts were built like small moving bomb shelters. They were pentagonal in design and had an armored dome above it. There were no windows to speak of, and it floated a few feet off the ground. Bastian explained to Harry and Sheyna that the crafts were also equipped with assault weapons, should the need ever arise for them. Every time one of the crafts would come by, Harry would quickly renew the glamour charm. Not that they'd be easily recognized anyway. Their heavy coats and hoods obscured their identity. One day they also saw a fleet of Baron Airships fly over them. This only further confused them.

"We're heading straight for Strife territory." Said Andrea "Why would Garden and Baron be there?"

"Good question." Said Bastian "We should find out soon though. We'll be at the border in another two weeks, if we can keep this pace."

"We're making really good time." Said Harry "I thought it'd take us months to get where we're going."

"It'll still take a few more to get to the lafa Tree." Said Andrea "From what I've heard you have to pass some mountains to get to it."

"We're still making good time." Said Harry

They traveled for another week and a half, it was then that they ran into a major problem, and found some answers to their questions. They came to a ridge and looked over it.

"Bloody hell!" Exclaimed Harry

"Whoa!" Said Bastian

"That's a lot of guns." Said Sheyna

"So this is where they were going." Said Ethan thoughtfully

Down in the ridge an amazing, yet terrifying sight met their eyes. There were five huge structures floating in a line across the valley floor. One was mostly blue, another was a deep red, the next was white, a fourth was grey and the last was a deep yellow color. They were Bessaid, Macalania, Balamb, Trabia and Coral Garden respectively. Around each garden, large assault crafts could be seen, swarming like sentry bees. Soldiers were scattered across the grounds, all in ranks. Some held guns, others gunblades and even more with other types of weapons. Across the field from them, were various mechs lined across the border. They were different from the Baron mechs. These were built like spiders, standing on four huge legs. Each robot had a considerable amount of fire power. There were guns mounted on the front, back and sides of them. They also had what was clearly a missile launcher on their heads. In addition to

the several hundred mechs, there were airships flying overhead. Each one armed to the proverbial teeth as well. Soldiers also scattered throughout the ground. This was the border guard of Strife Corp.

"What the hell are they doing?" Asked Harry "They're just standing there."

"They seem to be awaiting orders." Said Andrea "There's probably a transmission argument between the leaders of the two armies."

"I wish I knew what they were saying." Said Sophia

"Maybe..." Said Harry thinking. This was on the spot thinking, but it could work. He focused on a few particular charms and started combining them internally. He worked on altering the Quietus and Sonarus charms, added to the charms used in Extendable Ears. He lobbed the bundled charms toward Balamb garden, all the while holding out his hand. There was a sound in the air like an extremely loud beep. It caused everyone to hold their ears in pain. Harry grinned sheepishly before trying to adjust the signal with his hands. Soon enough they heard a voice coming through thin air.

"...we only want permission to pursue the Sorceress and her army." Said one voice "Surely you understand the dangers of letting someone like that control an army?"

"We have orders not allow anyone past this point." Said another more clipped voice "Garden had been trying to gain access to Gaea for the past year, you were denied at all other access points. We ask you again to leave us peacefully."

"You are putting us in a difficult position General Crane." Said the first voice

"The same could be said for you Admiral Dincht." Said the second voice, now known as General Crane "You are not going past this point, you have five minutes to remove your fleet, otherwise we'll be forced to open fire."

"Is that a threat!" Asked Dinchth heatedly

"Simply a warning Admiral." Said Crane "Now you have four minutes and forty-two seconds."

"This doesn't look good." Said Harry

"Wonder where that Baron fleet is?" Said Ethan

"We won't be moving." Said the voice of Dinchth. "You are blocking the way to both Gaea and Myst. This cannot be allowed. It is in direct violation of the Peace Accords."

"As is gathering an assault force to attack another territory." Said Crane "Two minutes and fifteen seconds."

"Something is wrong." Said Andrea "We saw that Baron fleet head this way a few hours ago. It looks like they've been here for that long, maybe longer. They had to have seen them, unless..."

"You don't think...? " Asked Bastian

"What?" Asked Sheyna

"Ten seconds Admiral." Said the General "Four, three, two, one. All units OPEN FIRE!"

"All units engage the enemy, blast through the border!"

Harry cut the link as the blasts started flying. The assault vessels surged forward to meet the mechs. Soldiers charged at the SeeDs. The airships started firing on the Gardens, which in turn fired right back. There was one particularly large airship. The group figured it to be the Strife fleet's flagship. It was all grey with black paneling along its bottom. It held its engines all along the sides, just below a long line of gun emplacements. It traded fire with the Gardens, along with its smaller counterparts. The SeeD strike aircrafts buzzed around, firing at the larger airships and bringing them down.

On the ground the assault crafts were being mauled by the mechs. The infantry conflict was being dominated by the SeeDs. They had superior strength and spell casting abilities. The strife soldiers also had mainly ranged weapons. There were a few swordsmen, but they were few and far between, and nothing compared to the gunbladers. The tide of the battle slowly started turning into the seeds favor, this was until reinforcements arrived for Strife.

From over the heads of the six observers, the Baron fleet came, flanking the SeeDs. They never had a chance to prepare. The airships dropped mechs of their own, and started firing on the Garden's unprotected flank. At first the group thought they would attack the Strife soldiers as well, until it became evident that they were both after SeeD.

"This is sickening!" Shouted Andrea angrily "They want to take out the peacekeepers so they can fight with no interference!"

"Can't we do anything?" Asked Sophia

"We can try." Said Harry. He pulled out the stone disk containing Seth and pressed it to his right hand. There was a blue glow before the slab of stone was absorbed back into his body.

"You actually remembered the purge in here." Observed Seth "I was a bit worried you'd forget."

"Not this time." Said Harry mentally "As you can see I'm going to need your help in a minute."

"Just call." Said Seth.

The others also reequipped their junctions. Down on the valley floor. The SeeD infantry was fighting with all their might against the overwhelming force. GF started appearing everywhere. Some in more than one place. There were several Shiva as well as huge demonic black creatures. Sophia identified them as Diablos. There were also minotaur looking creatures. Some were blue, others purple and even more a golden orange color. They were Sacred, Minotaur and Ifrit respectfully. The first two were Earth elementals while the

last was Fire elemental. Other GF appeared as well. One in particular caught Harry's attention. It looked just like Tiamat only a purple-grey color instead of black. This was Bahaumut the fabled dragon king.

The landscape below became awash with different colors. There were explosions everywhere. In one section a group of SeeDs battled against several mechs. The machines were winning. They mercilessly launched a barrage of missiles right at the assembled mercenaries. The SeeDs combined their magic to make a protect spell, but it didn't do them much good. The missiles impacted and blew them all to smithereens. Another group of SeeDs was having better luck. The strife mechs were weak against lightning, so the SeeDs were using Thundaga spells as well as summoning Quazicotl. The alternate versions of Andrea's GF weren't nearly as strong as her own.

The Bahaumut flew at the Strife flagship, energy filling its jaws. It got a firm hold on the stern of the ship and released the Mega Flare attack at point blank range. It then let go of the ship and started attacking the Baron airships. The Strife Flagship started to crash with a stream of fire trailing behind it. It crashed into a group of Baron and Strife mechs, taking them out of the battle.

The group noticed that the lead Baron airship was preparing to launch a barrage of missiles. The other crafts seemed to be doing the same thing.

"We can't let them fire those!" Said Harry "Crusader's Vengeance!" He said calling out Seth. He appeared with a large black gunblade in hand. The others also summoned their GF, or in Sheyna's case, used materia to summon her Aeon.

Quazicotl soared into the air and launched a massive ball of lightning at the assembled ships. Seth slashed through the smaller airships that tried to escape. Shiva imprisoned several of more ships in her super hard ice crystals. Leviathan summoned a massive tsunami, taking out several mechs of both Strife and Baron. Pandamona was blowing the few missiles that managed to fire into one another. A turquoise colored mouse-like creature also flew around the battlefield. It had large blue eyes and a rabbit-like tail. Its head had three spiky

protrusions at its crown and a red ruby set in the center. This was Carbuncle, Bastian's GF. It used its power to erect shields around the five Gardens.

Once the other GF joined the battle, the tide started to turn back toward the SeeD's favor. This was until yet another group arrived. These were a group comprised of Black airships. They bore a silver depiction of an angel on their bows and people sporting black armor could be seen onboard. The ships seemed to radiate an otherworldly energy. In a massive wave a black magic. All the GF and summons were banished. The group reappeared and all held their heads in pain.

"What was that?" Moaned Sheyna

"Banish spell." Said Sophia weakly "Their used to get rid of a summon, without actually killing it."

"Ruddy spells." Muttered Harry "Who the hell are t hose guys?"

"No idea." Said Andrea "That crest is totally foreign to me."

"Their only attacking Garden!" Said Sophia "This was all one big setup!"

"Looks that way." Said Bastian "What are we gonna do now?"

"We can't do anything." Said Harry "Our GF's have all been rendered unconscious. There are only six of us. Going down there would be suicide."

The remaining airships, as well as the new arrivals turned their weapons back toward the Gardens. The SeeDs had retreated back into the nearest assault craft or back into the closest Garden following the banishment of their GF. The Gardens were completely surrounded with nowhere to go. The airships had missiles armed and ready to fire. It looked like it was all over for Garden.

"We can't let this happen!" Said Andrea "If they do this, there will only be four Gardens left in the entire world!"

"I've got an idea." Said Harry "It's really dangerous, and I could get killed, but it might work."

"What are you going to do?" Asked Sheyna

"Just watch." Said Harry he disappeared and looked for a place without too much magic. He found one right at the top of Balamb Garden. He appeared there just as the missiles were released. He stretched out his magic as far as it would go, and managed to cover all the Gardens with it. It was a good thing they were close and that Balamb was in the middle of the formation. He poured all his power into making a shield against the missiles. A white force field blocked the missiles, and they exploded against it. Wasting no time the Gardens started to blast through the assembled ranks, and headed west, toward Myst. Harry used the last of his energy to apparate back to the ridge. He collapsed upon his arrival and promptly blacked out. The others sighed in relief as they saw the Gardens retreating safely.

"Well that was impressive." Said Ethan "I thought for sure they were a goner."

"He's got a lot of power." Said Sheyna

The relief was short lived however, The airships blasted a final barrage of missiles at the retreating Gardens. Coral, the next to last in line, got hit in their hover ring. The Garden started to fly unsteadily, but it was otherwise unharmed. The next to last though, was hit by the majority of the missiles. The group watched in horror as the beautiful structure that was once Bessaid Garden was blasted apart by the deadly barrage. A flaming ball of metal and concrete was all that remained as the structure hit the ground and exploded.

The four once residence of the building were staring in shock. They'd come to think of the place as home, even Sophia and Bastian who'd either been kicked out or left. It held a lot of good memories, and people. Now it was nothing more than a burning crater. The other Gardens simply kept flying, not seeming to notice that one of them wouldn't be flying ever again.

Antym looked out of the bridge window at the burning remains of his former Garden. Inside he was seething at what had just happened. His friends had been on that Garden, and no matter how much they hated him, they were still the closest thing he had to family.

"Was that really necessary?" He asked the silver haired man standing across the room.

"What do you mean? We missed most of them." Said Kuja "Your Emperor wanted all of SeeD gone."

"That wasn't even all the Gardens." Said Antym "There were four that weren't present."

"Their at the southern coast of Gaea." Said Kuja "They are being dealt with."

"I still think it was overkill." Said Antym

"This coming from the man who cast a Flare spell on a dying sorceress?" Asked Kuja mockingly "You aren't one to tell me about overkill. I know all about you Leonheart. You were a SeeD sent on a deep cover mission into Baron. You were to become Mia's Knight and sway her to SeeD's control. But she didn't do the regular bond, she couldn't because you didn't love her. You had someone else, but you didn't tell your superiors because such a thing wasn't aloud. Mia wanted you as her knight anyway and made you steal Griever. It all went down hill from there."

"You seem to know a lot." Said Antym "You shouldn't show your enemies all your cards."

"You've only begun to see the whole deck." Said Kuja "I am much more than you could possibly imagine."

"The emperor may trust you, but I know Mia doesn't and more importantly I don't. I know you're playing both sides, but cross me and I will personally see to your death."

Kuja simply laughed, and it sounded like two different laughs rolled into one, both would send chills down any normal person's spine, however, Antym wasn't a normal person. "I look forward to the day you try." Said Kuja. He smirked at Antym one last time before apparating away. The Knight looked around the bridge and realized that none of the crew had heard their conversation. It was as though only a second had passed since they'd started talking. He realized then that Kuja was a very real threat. He'd need to get a lot stronger if he wanted to beat the man in combat.

...

Harry awoke to the feel of something rubbing his head. It felt really good and he was tempted to fall right back asleep. Then he remembered what he'd been doing before he blacked out. His eyes slowly opened and he looked at his surroundings. He was lying near a fire. This made him wonder where he was, before they'd been unable to find any wood for a fire. He then noticed that the area, while still covered in snow, had a sparse population of evergreens. He felt his head lying on something soft, and something was still messing with his hair. He looked up and saw Sheyna looking off in the distance, her hand absently stroking his hair.

"Hi..." Said Harry awkwardly

"You're awake." Said Sheyna relieved "You've been out for a few days."

Harry lifted his head off her lap and stood up. He still felt a little light headed, but otherwise he was fine. He saw the others a little ways away. They all looked like they'd seen better days.

"What happened?" Asked Harry "The last thing I remember was stopping the missiles."

"They fired again." Said Sheyna "The Gardens were almost out of range, but one of them took several direct hits."

"Which one?" Asked Harry apprehensively

“Bessaid.” Said Sheyna somberly “They haven’t spoken more than two words everyday since then. Andrea just said we were going south and that’s where we headed.”

“I thought we needed to go west.” Said Harry “Why south?”

“We can’t get past the border.” Said Sheyna “Strife blocked it all off, Baron tried to get through, and then they started fighting each other.”

“So Andrea was right then.” Said Harry “They just wanted to get SeeD out of the way.”

Harry walked over to the other four and cleared his throat. They looked up at him and he could see that they’d placed emotionless masks on their faces. It didn’t surprise him that Andrea had done that, she had one most of the time, but on the others it looked out of place.

“You’re awake now.” Said Andrea

“Guess I don’t have to carry you anymore.” Said Bastian attempting a weak smile, but failing miserably.

“Sheyna told me what happened.” Said Harry

“There’s nothing you can do about it now.” Said Andrea “You saved the other four, so don’t worry about what happened after that. It’s in the past.”

“Alright.” Said Harry skeptically, he decided now was the time for a subject change. “Why are we heading south?”

“Only way we can go.” Said Bastian “It’s too far to go back to Icicle Inn, and Strife is blocking all points west of here. Plus Baron has got patrols scouring the whole area.”

“There’s a town on the southern coast.” Said Andrea “We might be able to charter a ship.”

“It’s worth a try.” Said Harry “How are the fiends in this area?”

“Weak.” Said Andrea “We’ve all re-equipped our junctions, so we haven’t had much trouble.”

“Fancy some training?” Asked Harry “If the fiends are weak we should practice with each other, we’ll get stronger that way.”

“May as well.” Said Andrea

After they both retrieved their gunblades, they started to spar with each other a quarter mile away from the camp. Andrea was the first to strike, she came at Harry with a flurry of strikes, the wizard barely managed to block them before trying to trip her with his right leg. She hopped over the sweep and sent a punch at his face, which caught him off guard and sent him staggering backwards. He retaliated with an assault of his own, putting her on the defensive. Soon their blades were locked in a stalemate. Harry pushed against her blade, trying to gain the advantage. Andrea pushed right back not yielding in the least.

“You do have some skills with that thing.” She said condescendingly
“But it’s over now.”

Before Harry could respond she stopped pushing against his blade and dodged to the side. Harry had still been pushing and overbalanced. Andrea caught him with a sweep and he was sprawled out on the ground. She got ready to bring her blade down, but Harry blocked it with his own. Andrea had the leverage advantage and was making Harry’s blade slowly descend back toward his chest. Harry brought up his legs and sent her flying away with a double kick to the gut.

Their spar continued in this fashion for a few more hours, to the point where they were supporting each other on their walk back to camp.

“We should do this again sometime.” Said Andrea

“Yeah maybe next time you’ll win.” Said Harry

“You didn’t win either.” She shot back in mock ire.

Harry was glad he was starting to break through her cold exterior, so he continued to goad her. "Sure I did, I knocked you down five more times than you did me."

"I think you're count is a little off." Said Andrea "You spent half the time on the ground."

"Just a part of my tactics." Said Harry giving her his trademark lopsided grin.

"And what tactics would those be?" Asked Andrea smirking "Cower on the ground in fear of your superiors?"

"I don't see any superiors around here." Said Harry "There's just me and some wannabe soldier."

"If my arms didn't feel like they'd fall off I'd hurt you for that." Said Andrea

"Guess you'll have to take a rain check on it." Said Harry

"I suppose I will." Said Andrea

The eventually made it back to camp. The rest of the group was sitting around the fire, all seemingly lost in thought.

"Hyne, what did you two try to do kill each other!" Yelled Sophia. The two's clothes were ripped in several places, and they sported quite a few cuts and bruises.

"Who won?" Asked Bastian

"I did." They both said at the same time.

"Harry are you trying to get yourself killed?" Asked Sheyna "You just woke up four hours ago."

"I'm fine." Said Harry, then he dropped to the ground exhausted.

"Guess that means I won." Said Andrea

"I need an Elixir." Moaned Harry from the ground "We'll call it a draw." He added before closing his eyes and falling asleep.

...

A few weeks later the group had finally made it to the city they'd been headed to. The sign above the town entrance identified the place as Frozen Harbor. It was a very apt name. The place, like much of Glacia, was covered in snow. The water was clear, save for a few icebergs in the distance, which was a good thing for the ships. As they got closer they noticed one large problem. All the ships bore the Strife logo.

"You have got to be kidding me." Said Sheyna

"It's not surprising." Said Andrea "They're trying to keep everyone out of their borders."

"What now?" Asked Harry

"We still need to get on a ship." Said Bastian. "I've got an idea."

"And what would that be?" Asked Sophia

"Watch and learn." Said Bastian

They followed the ex-SeeD to a secluded part of the city. He lead them into an ally and told them to wait. He left and returned six minutes later with six soldiers on his tail.

"He can't possibly be thinking of..." Started Harry, but the soldiers started firing their weapons.

"Harry stun them!" Yelled Bastian

The wizard sighed and threw six balls of red light at the oncoming enemies. They all slumped to the ground in a heap.

“Now all we have to do is borrow their uniforms.” Said Bastian “They all were near the same ship, so I think their all supposed to be on that one.”

Harry walked over to one of the soldiers and placed him in a full body bind. He removed the mans helmet and woke him up.

“What is this!” Yelled the man indignantly

“Shut up!” Barked Harry “Now I want some answers.”

“Like I’d tell you!” Said the soldier.

“You don’t have to tell me anything.” Said Harry, he looked into the man’s eyes and started to probe his mind with Legilimancy. He found out that the six men were indeed from the same ship, and the same squadron. The ship was scheduled to leave port tomorrow morning. From there it was heading to the southern coast of Myst. The man didn’t know mission specifics, unfortunately, so Harry found out the necessary protocol for soldiers. He realized it would be very easy to pass as one, the commander of the ship wasn’t on a very personal relationship with his crew. Most of them were new recruits anyway.

“Well Gerald.” Said Harry using the man’s name, which he’d picked up during his scan “It’s time to say goodnight, Stupify!” The man slumped back into unconsciousness with the rest of his comrades.

After the tedious process of stripping the soldiers of their uniforms, the group put them on, after a cleaning charm from Harry and some alterations for the women. Harry then Obliviated the soldiers, making them think they’d gotten drunk and went to sleep in the alley. Bastian lead the way back to the ship, and soon they were on board. From there Harry took the lead. He lead the group to where the other soldiers were supposed to meet for a briefing. It was fortunate that only the commander was addressed by his proper name. All the other soldiers had numbers on their uniforms.

They lined up, side by side, along with the rest of the awaiting soldiers. A severe looking man with wild black hair and a bushy beard

and mustache stood facing the soldiers. His uniform was red and black, instead of dark blue.

“Alright maggots!” He yelled “From this point on your asses belong to me. I am Colonel Farris. I am also in charge of this ship. We will be heading to the southeast corner of Myst. There’s been some resistance to our influence in that part of the world, as you very well know. Our mission is to persuade those bitches in Alexandria to side with us or die.”

“Isn’t he original.” Said Seth mockingly. Harry fought down a laugh at this, since he privately agreed with his guardian.

“Some of you may wonder why we aren’t using airships.” Said the colonel “To answer your question, we need to go under their radar, they won’t suspect a naval strike. We do however have several aircraft carriers in this fleet. In fact you’re standing on one. This trip will take the better part of a month, you will all have stations to man and jobs to do around the ship, I don’t want to see ANYONE slacking off. If I do, this is what will happen to you.” He looked around the assembled soldiers and his eyes landed on Harry “You, get up here boy!”

“That damn word again.” Said Harry mentally. He sighed and walked up to the commander.

“What we’ve got here men is a scrawny weakling.” Said Farris “This is the embodiment of the word slacker. Therefore you will spend tonight, tomorrow and the rest of the week doing all the menial chores. Swabbing the deck, cleaning the galley and emptying the septic tanks.”

Harry would have protested, but thought better of it. It was only a few chores, nothing he hadn’t done before. The Dursleys had used him as a slave whenever he was there with them. He was sure there’d be others joining him.

“You think it’s funny private?” Asked the colonel looking in the direction he’d spotted Harry in. “Get up here boy!”

Harry suppressed a laugh as Bastian marched up to the colonel. "You two will get to know each other really well. For the next two weeks you'll be working together."

"Two, but I thought you only said one before!" Said Bastian indignantly.

"Shut up!" Hissed Harry.

"That's three weeks now." Said the colonel

Harry sighed. It was going to be a long voyage.

...

A/N: Sorry I didn't get this out sooner, but things happen in life that prevent fast updates. With that said the next chapter will be posted next Saturday, this will give me more time to work on the chapters that I am currently writing and make it so I don't get too far behind should writer's block rear its ugly head, I'm working with about two lead chapters now so that shouldn't be a problem and updates SHOULD occur every week, unless of course I don't have internet access, but I don't foresee that happening. On another note the review count has been lacking the past couple chapters, I can understand that for the Wizing chapter as I know most of you don't like those, but I would like to see it where it was before, it only takes a couple seconds to say SOMETHING (Last time I said that a few of you said just that) I don't care what you say, call me a fag, say my story sucks, but if you do say that tell me why and leave it signed so I can defend myself. I won't bore you with my rambling anymore, have a happy April Fools' Day.

Causing Strife for Strife

Harry staggered back into his quarters exhausted. He shared them with Ethan and Bastian, but if he saw the latter any time soon, he might be forced to commit a homicide. The man had no sense of the word tact, or if he did, he wasn't exercising it. They were supposed to be keeping a low profile, but that was hard, as Colonel Farris seemed to like making both of them examples on a constant basis. It had only been a week since they'd started their voyage, and already they had been given hundreds of demerits. Not that Harry cared about those, but every time they were disciplined it involved a new chore for them to do. It could all be avoided if Bastian would swallow his pride and keep his mouth shut.

A prime example had been just today. They were swabbing the deck, like they did everyday. They were forced to use the Strife equivalent of a paper towel, which turned out to be a paper towel. The deck was roughly seven hundred square feet. This meant that it took them the better part of eight hours to clean the whole thing. And that was if they were working as hard as they could. It didn't help that the other crew members, as well as the colonel himself, was busy antagonizing them.

"You lazy bums need to hurry it up!" Was the most common phrase spoken by the colonel.

The crew members liked to say things like "Look at the maids, working hard." Or "I bet you're used to being on hands and knees aren't you, I bet you take it in both holes."

It was the last comment that had set Bastian off today. It had bothered Harry as well, but he was going to let it slide. Bastian however, grabbed the offending soldier by his throat and was about to chuck the trembling man overboard, but of course, the colonel had been right there.

"I see you've got a lot of energy. You'll be up bright and early tomorrow morning." He assured them "The fiend cages need cleaning, the galley has generously donated ladles so you don't have to use your hands. Then you'll be swabbing the deck again."

Bastian just couldn't let this go either. "I've had about enough of this!" He yelled "I am not here to be your fucking slave!"

"You're here to do whatever the hell I tell you to do!" Yelled Farris "For your outburst you'll work in complete silence from now on, one peep and I'll throw your sorry ass into the brig!"

"Yes sir!" Said Harry before Bastian could further make an ass of himself

"I wasn't talking to you!" Yelled the commander "For that you'll be joining him, and no talking for you either."

Harry was further irritated by Seth's maniacal laughter through his mind. "It's not funny." Grumbled the wizard mentally

"Yes it is." Said Seth through laughter. "If you don't like it, you could always slaughter all the soldiers and take over the ship. Most of them joined with the intention to help achieve world domination anyway."

"We'll save that for a last resort." Said Harry

Now he lounged on his steel cot. He'd reinforced it with cushioning charms, so it wasn't too bad. He'd even conjured a few pillows and expanded the space some. Their quarters were probably bigger than the colonel's.

"Damn I'm tired." Said Ethan coming through the door.

"You don't know what tired is." Said Harry weakly "I don't know how much more of this I can take."

"I didn't know goading that guy into saying that would tick Bastian so much." Said Ethan

"That was you?" Asked Harry incredulously "I should kill you for that."

"It was too bad I couldn't see the look on his face." Said Ethan "Stupid helmets."

"I should have thrown you overboard." Said Bastian coming into the room "Now we have to shovel shit, with SPOONS!"

"What have they got you doing anyway?" Asked Harry

"Weapons maintenance." Said Ethan "I don't think I've been doing a good job though." He was grinning widely

"What did you do?" Asked Harry interested

"Let's just say, that I hope they don't plan on firing those missile launchers anytime soon." He said triumphantly

"Just don't get caught." Said Harry "If our cover is blown we'll have to fight off all these soldiers, I think we might win, but if we can avoid it then we should."

"That's probably the best idea." Said Ethan

"What are the girls doing anyway?" Asked Bastian "I haven't really seen them."

"I think Sophia ended up in the galley." Said Ethan "Sheyna has been taking inventory of the cargo."

"I hope they don't have too many guns or materia." Said Harry "The temptation might be too much for her."

The others had a good laugh at this. They knew Sheyna had a thing about powerful firearms and rare materia.

"What about Andrea?" Asked Bastian

"You know how a lot of the soldiers are complaining about their training regiment?" Asked Ethan rhetorically "Well, somehow she managed to persuade the drill sergeant to let her run it."

"When do we have to report for that?" Asked Harry nervously

"I don't know." Said Bastian "But with our luck, probably right after we swab the decks, clean the bathrooms and clean the fiend cages."

"No problem." Said Harry "As long as no one's looking at us, I can use magic and make things go a lot faster."

"Sounds like a plan." Said Bastian

"But from now on Bastian," Started Harry "Please, just let it go mate. It isn't worth it."

"I'm starting to agree with you." Said Bastian "Don't goad me anymore Ethan!"

"Don't blame it on me." Said Ethan defensively

...

The next day found Harry and Bastian below the deck, inside the fiend hold.

"Why do they need trained fiends?" Asked Harry "Isn't the firepower enough?"

"Hell if I know." Said Bastian

They decided to tackle each cage together, being that there were about a hundred of them, each with at least two fiends inside. Bastian would distract the monsters and Harry would banish all the rubbish out of the cage. Farris had given them their ladles, telling them they had four hours to finish. The man was insane in Harry's humble opinion.

The first cage was simple enough, a few Grats were the only occupants. Fortunately, they didn't produce waste the traditional way, only a few shed tentacles here and there. Bastian kept them at bay by using well aimed fire spells. Harry banished all the gunk and used the Scurgify charm to clean the floor and walls. They continued in this fashion, cleaning Drake cages, lizard habitats, wolf cages and even the occasional Bomb containers.

They ran into a problem when they reached the larger fiends. The first was in the form of a Belhemoth. It looked different than a normal one, it was blue and had yellow spikes and a silver horn.

“That doesn’t look too friendly.” Said Harry

“I don’t know if I can hold that thing off by myself.” Said Bastian “We may need to subdue it first.”

“I could try aiming spells from out here.” Said Harry, He sent a Banishing charm at the cage and the door disappeared.

“Umm....” Said Bastian nervously “I think that was a bad idea.”

The Belhemoth seemed to be confused at first. Then it realized it had a chance for freedom, the only thing standing in its way were two scrawny humans.

“We don’t even have our weapons.” Said Harry, he pulled his standard issue machine gun from his back and fired a few shots at the monster. The bullets bounced harmlessly off the creature’s armor-like hide.

Bastian removed his gun as well and started firing. Then he threw the gun at the creature and sent a Firaga spell after it. The gun exploded on the monster’s shoulder, making a small crater on the skin. The Belhemoth howled in rage, charging at the warriors.

Harry fired a series of stunners at it, but they didn’t seem to do anything. Desperately he decided to try something different. He raised his hand and pointed his palm toward the Belhemoth. “Imperio!” He shouted. The Belhemoth seemed to falter in its charge. It then sat on its haunches and looked at Harry with a glazed over expression. Wanting to test his control, he tried a few simple commands. “Stand up” The monster did so “Go back into the cage” It did as it was told once again. Satisfied, Harry conjured a new door and set it in place of the old one. He released the creature from the spell and it looked around confused. It charged at the door, but the security measures had been put back into place. Sleeping gas

poured from vents in the creature's cage and it slumped to the floor unconscious.

"Wow." Said Bastian "That's some spell. There's a materia that can do that too."

"There is?" Asked Harry

"It only gives you limited control though, and if the fiend you're controlling gets physically stimulated, like if someone hits it, the spell is broken."

"This spell doesn't break unless the victim fights it off, or the caster lets them out." Said Harry "It's not something I'd willingly do to another human, if I could help it."

They didn't talk while they finished their work. They didn't hit anymore snags, so the job was finished with an hour and a half to spare, thanks to Harry's magic. Bastian decided to explore the ship, and Harry thought this was a good idea. The two of them hadn't been given a chance to do this because of all the work they'd been doing. They split up and decided to meet back in the fiend hold in an hour, Farris would be expecting them to be toiling away at fiend droppings, so it was a good idea to be there when he came.

Harry shifted invisible and headed toward the officer's section of the ship. Troops weren't allowed here, so he figured that there must be something worth seeing there. First he passed the quarters. He could tell just from the outside that they were a lot better furnished than the troop bunks. He eventually came to what appeared to be a conference room. There were several men sitting around a table, all wearing the red or green officers' uniform, depending on their rank. Harry slipped into the door just before it was closed. He could see a map on the table, but the soldiers were gathered so closely around it, only a few parts of it were visible to him.

"This is the area around Alexandria." Said Farris, pointing to the map. "As you can see they are at a good location to repel land strikes. However, their city has one major weakness. Our sources tell us that there is an abandoned dock beneath the castle. It is located at the

base of a cliff directly behind the city. All we need to do is find this dock, blast our way in and get inside the castle. From there we can take them out from the inside and avoid too much actual combat."

"Cowards." Said Seth

"I'll have to agree with you there mate." Said Harry mentally

"What makes you think they don't know about it?" Asked one of the officers

"We have a contact who has been on the inside." Said Farris "The president trusts his information and the general trusts the president."

None of the men could argue with that. Harry had a good suspicion as to who the source was. He was still trying to figure out exactly what Kuja was trying to do. He was steeling Eshar technology, cavorting with the president of Strife, negotiating with evil Sorceresses and he was probably negotiating with Baron as well. It seemed to Harry that he was trying to start a massive war, but what purpose could there be to that. He didn't know Kuja, but he did know Voldemort, and he knew that the Dark Lord wouldn't do anything that wouldn't ultimately aid him in the long run.

"How are the troops coming Sergeant Blake?" Asked Farris

"Most of them still need a lot of work." Informed Blake morosely "But some of them are showing real skill. One soldier in particular is showing a good knack for command. I've been letting him take control of the drills, under my supervision of course."

"Well push them harder." Said Farris "I've got two shit-heads that I'm personally conditioning. I'm going to send them your way eventually, for now I need to see how they're doing in the fiend hold."

Harry took this as his cue to leave. He simply apparated back to the fiend hold, making sure not to run a foul of too much magic. Bastian was already there waiting for him.

"Where did you go?" He asked

“Officer’s meeting.” Said Harry “I found out how their going to invade Alexandria, we can’t let them do that.”

“I went to the cargo area, those guys doing inventory are going to be pissed when they find out what Sheyna did.”

“What did she do?” Asked Harry, not sure weather he really wanted to know.

“Well they had these experimental machine guns down there.” Said Bastian “Their supposed to fire photon bursts instead of bullets. I know for a fact that she ‘borrowed’ one. The rest are rigged to blow when fired. Then there’s the materia. I still don’t know how she did it, but all they’ve got is transform magic.”

“Meaning?” Asked Harry

“Sorry.” Said Bastian “Those materia contain two almost useless spells. Mini, which makes the victim small, and Toad, which turns them into a toad.”

“How did she manage to change the materia?” Wondered Harry

“You did it.” Said Bastian

“But that wasn’t purposefully done.” Said Harry “I’ll have to ask her about that later.”

“So you maggots actually finished?” Said a booming voice from the doorway “And you’re in one piece too. Now I want you back up on deck, it needs swabbing again.”

Bastian had thankfully learned his lesson and didn’t protest the order. They still had three weeks left on the ship, and Harry was counting down the days.

...

It was about a week later in the middle of the night. The group had arranged to meet in the fiend hold to discuss their next course of action. This was what found six people clad in blue and black uniforms wearing black helmets with visors scattered around the room.

“You all know what their planning for Alexandria?” Asked Harry

“We’ve been informed.” Said Sophia “That’s so cowardly, they’re using this ship along with two others as the vessels to infiltrate the dock. The rest of the fleet is going to be a decoy, storming the front.”

“How are they going to manage that?” Asked Harry “Alexandria is on top of a huge plateau.”

“The ships have long range cannons.” Said Andrea “They’re going to use small airships to ferry troops and fiends up the cliff. Then they’re going to storm the city.

“So what are we going to do?” Asked Sheyna

“I’m open to suggestions.” Said Harry

“We’ve already sabotaged this ship.” Said Ethan “What we need now is a way to warn Alexandria. Even with what we’ve done here, if they sneak into the castle, it could be disastrous.”

“We could always take over the ship.” Said Bastian “I know we can take all these soldiers.”

“It’s too risky.” Said Harry “If we fight them and do too much damage to the ship, then what? We’ll sink right along with the boat.”

“You’ve got a point.” Said Bastian

“We could hold the officers hostage.” Said Sheyna

“Doubt it would work.” Said Andrea “The troops don’t have too much loyalty. They put up a good front, but in a situation like that, they’d most likely let us kill them.”

“So we need a way to get off this ship and into Alexandria before they get to Myst.” Said Sophia

“There are airships on this ship.” Said Harry “Their small though. Not good for long range travel.”

“I might be able to fix that.” Said Ethan “I’ll take a look at one and see what I can do to it. It just so happens that my next assignment is to assist the technicians in the hanger.”

“I’m glad the only identify people by numbers.” Said Sophia “Names would’ve made things complicated.

“Interesting security risk though.” Said Andrea “Going by numbers means anyone could just waltz onboard with someone else’s uniform and number.”

“Like us.” Said Bastian triumphantly

“We’ll meet back here in a three days.” Said Harry “Remember to keep a low profile, and let’s lay off messing with their stuff for now. One question though, Sheyna how did you manage to change their materia?”

“Easy.” Said Sheyna “It’s all at a low level, so I just cast Toad on them until they changed to that spell.”

“Well don’t do it anymore.” Said Harry “We’ve been taking too many risks as it is, the only reason why no one has caught on is because almost everyone on this ship is incompetent.”

“You sound like Grindlewald.” Observed Seth

“Shut up.” Said Harry mentally

The group went their separate ways and began to plan their next move. Hopefully, they’d be off this ship by the end of the week.

...

Three days later found the group once again in the fiend hold. Ethan had managed to modify one of the ship engines to facilitate long distance travel, at the cost of weapons and speed. Now they found that they had a new problem.

"If we just take the ship they'll shoot us right down." Said Andrea "We need a plan."

"I've already thought of that." Said Harry "I'll modify a memo so that we get recon duty using that airship."

"It is an eight man craft." Said Ethan "That should be believable, Farris will never go for it though. He'd miss his maids too much."

"Watch it Ethan." Warned Bastian, the SeeD simply smirked at his friend.

"He won't know until we're already onboard the airship and halfway to Alexandria." Said Harry "Plus it will be an executive order and even if he doesn't like what it says; it will be coming from over his head."

"If you say so." Said Ethan, "So if all else fails we'll resort to plan B."

"Just so we're clear." Said Bastian "Plan B is trying to take out the whole fleet in a head on assault that could kill us all, right?"

"I wouldn't put it that way..." Said Harry "But more or less, yes that's the worse case scenario."

"It shouldn't come to that." Said Andrea "But if it does, we'll handle it."

Once again they disbanded and prepared to make their escape from the ship. Harry shifted invisible and headed back to the officers' section. He went into the same conference room that he'd been in a week or so ago. There were still papers scattered about the table. Harry conjured an envelope and a blank piece of paper. He looked around at the other papers on the table, spying one with the president's signature on it, he copied the signature and placed it at

the bottom of the paper. Now it was official, and there was nothing that Farris could do about it. In another three days they'd be leaving.

...

So it was that the group had been called into the briefing room of the ship. A field captain was telling them what they'd need to do in their 'mission.'

"Listen up people." The man was saying "I'm not sure why you six were specifically requested. However, I'm here to tell you what you need to do. You'll scout around the area using the airship's stealth capabilities. You'll relay your findings each day; the craft only has enough for a three day excursion. It's fast though so you should be able to make a good run in and back before you have to worry about low fuel."

"Understood sir!" Said Andrea militarily

The group boarded the airship, Ethan taking the position as pilot. The others found places around the bridge, each having their own stations to man. Sophia was co-pilot, Bastian was controlling the weapons systems. Andrea, Harry and Sheyna each had cameras to control.

"This is some ship." Said Harry "To think they have a whole fleet of these."

"They all have Esharian components." Said Ethan "They seem to have added them on recently."

"How the hell did Kuja manage to get a hold of something like that?" Wondered Harry aloud

"He has similar powers to yours right?" Asked Andrea

"Yeah, or at least Voldemort does." Said Harry "And Kuja has his own magic as well."

“Then he must have infiltrated Eshar and snuck out with the schematics for these ships.” Said Andrea “Then Strife went into overdrive on their production.”

“I see.” Said Harry “I just wish I knew what he was planning.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Said Sheyna “You can’t do anything about it now, and there’s no way for you to know what he’s doing.”

“I guess.” Said Harry still unsure “We’ll take care of things in Alexandria then head north to the lafa Tree. After that I’m not sure.”

“We’ll head back to Icicle Inn.” Said Bastian “The crew should have hidden the ship and made it into town by now.”

“In the meantime, if we can hinder Strife or Baron we should.” Said Andrea

Everyone nodded in agreement and they flew on in silence. After a few hours a flying over open water, they finally saw land in the distance. Ethan took them down as they came above land. They landed on the outskirts of a forest, which was in the shadow of a huge cliff.

“We need to disable the tracking system.” Said Andrea “If they see that we’ve stopped it’ll arouse suspicion too early.”

“But if we disable it they’ll think we’ve been shot down.” Said Harry “Then they might change their plans.”

“Hmm.” Said Ethan “The tracker is mounted to the engine, if I remove it then it won’t have a power source to keep functioning.”

“Is there a way to make the ship keep flying without us on it?” Asked Sheyna “Like an autopilot maybe?”

“That could work.” Said Ethan “We could just put the ship in stealth mode and let it fly in a circuit around the area, that will keep Strife thinking that we’re at least doing what we’re supposed to do, even if we’re not.”

“What about reporting?” Asked Harry

“We can take a com and use it.” Said Ethan “It’s still going to be risky though, if they decide to trace the com signal we’ll be compromised”

“Let’s hope for the best then.” Said Harry “What do we do after our three days are up?”

“We’ll report that the ship ran out of fuel and that we’ll just stay on standby.” Said Sophia “That should work, I don’t think they’ll risk sending a party in to get us.”

“Sounds good to me.” Said Harry “Where are we anyway?”

“I think this place is called Evil Forest.” Said Andrea

“Evil Forest?” Asked Harry incredulously “What kind of a name is that?”

“Don’t ask me.” Said Andrea “There is this superstition about the forest having a mind of its own and petrifying unwary people.”

“That’s a comforting thought.” Said Bastian

“We shouldn’t have too much of a problem.” Said Andrea “Even if one of us is turned to stone, we’ve got Esuna spells and some Soft Potions to take care of it.”

“What if the statue breaks while we’re stoned?” Asked Harry

“You die.” Said Andrea simply

Harry paled a bit at this, but his color quickly returned. The group set off toward the looming cliffs, heading into the dark forest. The deeper they went into the woods, the darker it got. Soon it was if night had fallen, this was preposterous though, because it should only be a little after second sunrise. They continued walking, destroying the week fiends in the area. The only things that bothered them were a few Grats and some Forest Trolls. The trolls were roughly humanoid

creatures, however they were covered in hair and had large pointed ears. Their faces had a large bulbous nose and their eyes were black and beady looking. Large fangs adorned their mouths and they held crude spears.

The first time they ran into a group of them, the trolls had charged out of nowhere. Sheyna was quick to unload an entire clip into the charging menaces, and the others dealt with the remainder of them accordingly. They walked a few more hours and finally Harry called them to a halt.

“Shouldn’t we have made it out of here by now?” He asked

“Yes we should have.” Said Andrea “It shouldn’t be this dark yet either.”

“Something is seriously wrong here.” Said Sheyna

“Let’s just keep going.” Said Bastian

They continued their trek through the forest, it was now almost impossible to see in front of them. Harry conjured a ball of light and had it float around them to illuminate their path. Suddenly Ethan let out a cry of alarm. Harry moved the ball over to his position. One of the trees had wrapped a vine around his foot and was pulling him into the dense foliage above. Everyone cast a Fire spell on the vines, causing them to release their struggling captive. Ethan hit the ground with a thud and stood up shakily.

“What was that?” Asked Harry

“I told you, this forest has a reputation.” Said Andrea “We should keep our eyes peeled.”

They started walking once again, hoping to make it out of the forest. The foliage started to get thicker as they continued on. Soon the path was all but non-existent. There was a rustling from the left. Harry whipped his head in that direction, focusing the light on it. All that was there were trees. Harry was about to move the light and keep going when the tree suddenly moved. The plant’s branches started to

extend toward the wizard, intent on grabbing him. Harry slashed through the branches, but more started to come from all around. He could hear the alarmed cries of his comrades and knew that they were facing similar obstacles. He cast a Firaga spell on the trees while everyone else did the same. Soon the area was a blazing inferno.

All of a sudden two large plants appeared. They stood on two large green legs and stood about nine feet tall. They had huge mouths filled with thin pointy teeth. They had six long tentacle-like vines that they swung around like whips. Around the creatures' mouths was a thick purple collar that seemed to be one large flower petal. The monsters took deep breaths and blew the fire right out.

"Those are Ochu!" Yelled Sophia

"They have a weakness?" Asked Harry, slashing once again at an encroaching vine

"They absorb poison, and their pollen causes the same effect as a Sleep spell." Said Andrea "These ones look weird though, their supposed to have a pink collar, theirs are dark purple."

"That's bad?" Asked Bastian dodging a tentacle swipe from one of the Ochus

"It means they could have different weaknesses and Strengths." Said Andrea.

As if on cue both Ochu opened their large mouths and released a cloud of blue pollen. The group ran away from the cloud, but they hadn't been the target. The pollen settled into the surrounding trees, causing them to begin glowing a faint green. Suddenly the trees uprooted and gained a vaguely humanoid appearance. Soon the warriors were surrounded by about fifty tree soldiers as well as the hulking Ochus. They stood with their backs facing each other, weapons drawn.

"We need to make a hole through their ranks and run." Said Ethan
"Taking them all on will tire us out too quickly."

There was no argument with his suggestion. Harry, Andrea and Bastian took point. They rushed at a group of tree soldiers. The others launched Firaga spells around the area to cover them. When they got close enough to the mutated plants, they wasted no time in hacking them to pieces with their blades. The other plants weren't going to let them get away with this though. They all started to surge forward, whipping their limbs, branches and vines about. Harry decided it was time to up the ante and launched a Flare spell at a cluster of plants. They were incinerated instantly and Harry started doing the same to the other plants. The others saw Harry cast the Flare spell and those that could followed his example.

Soon they had demolished enough of the offending plants to start making their way out of the circle. The Ochus let out a roar of indignation and rage while releasing another cloud of pollen. It hit more trees, making them into soldiers. The six warriors ran for all they were worth, firing Firaga and Flare spells over their shoulders. The trees that weren't uprooted still tried to grab them with their vines. This made running a lot slower than it should have been. Harry and Andrea were in the lead, using their gunblades to clear a path for the others as they ran.

Eventually they hit a snag. It came in the form of a steep embank overlooking a rapidly flowing river. The trees were normal in this area, but the mob of monster plants was still on their tails. They didn't have enough time to turn around and find another route, so their only choices were to jump into the river, or turn around and fight through the mob. Since the river was home to quite a few dangerous looking rapids, they only had one real choice.

"They'll be on us in less than a minute." Said Harry quickly "I think we've been going about this the wrong way, all in favor of summoning, do it!"

As soon as he said this, the first monster plant came into view. Everyone started to concentrate on their guardians or materia in order to unleash their power. With a green flash, six humans disappeared and in their place six ethereal beings stood, or in Quazicotl and Carbuncle's case, floated. Seth's gunblade tore

through the air, slashing straight through the assembled plants. Shiva froze about fifteen plants and one of the Ochu with one blast. Leviathan's tidal wave crashed into more of the plants, slamming them into the ground at a startling speed. Quazicotl used its lightning to fry the mutated foliage into a crisp. While this was going on Pandamona used its control over the wind to toss the plants into one another. Carbuncle simply floated in place, he being a defensive guardian and not having much use in the way of attacking.

When their attacks were done, the Aeons dissipated leaving behind a field of charred, diced, or frozen plants. The six humans returned to the physical plane to get a first hand view of the destruction. None of the plants remained alive.

"Well that takes care of that." Said Harry

"Don't look now, but there's something happening to the trees." Said Sophia apprehensively while pointing to the right

Harry and the others looked in that direction. What the wizard saw almost made him drop his gunblade in shock. There were seven more Ochus heading in their direction. In addition to the hulking plants, all the trees in the area began to uproot and charge toward the group. They wasted no time in casting Firaga and Flare spells at the encroaching fiends. It didn't seem to be doing much good though. Every time a spell was cast, an Ochu would open its maw and suck it in.

"They're using a modified form of Osmose!" Cried Sophia "The normal spell only takes pure magic, theirs is absorbing spells!"

"Run!" Cried Bastian as the plants started to pick up speed.

They ran as fast as they could, away from the raging fiends. Harry noticed that the fiends weren't trying to grab them, they seemed to be herding them towards something. Soon enough they came to a large clearing. It seemed to be overrun with vines that somewhat resembled a spider's web. They had no choice but to go into the clearing, and this proved to be a fatal decision. The plants

surrounding the place all uprooted and closed in around them, blocking any possible escape.

“Look what my pretties have brought for me to play with.” Said an amused female voice. A creature that somewhat resembled an attractive woman descended from the canopy above. She had pale green skin and wore a dress that appeared to be made of red rose petals. She sported two sets of large dragonfly wings. The most odd thing about her though was her face. The mouth and nose were normal, but the eyes were large blue insect eyes. Long dark green hair cascaded down to her waist, and she held some sort of scepter in her hands.

“We aren’t here to play.” Growled Harry

“Oh but you have to.” Said the woman “I like to play with my food before I eat it.”

“Just let us go and no one has to get hurt.” Said Andrea

“Surely you do think you can defeat me and my loyal minions.” Said the woman condescendingly “I am Tesakura, Mistress of the Forest. You can’t hope to fathom my power.”

“Looks like we don’t have a choice.” Said Sheyna, loading a demolition clip into her machine gun

“You aren’t going to take us alive!” Yelled Ethan defiantly while twirling his staff

“Let’s do it!” Said Sophia firing a bolt at Tesakura

The forest mistress dodged the bolt and it struck one of the mutated trees. After that the fight was on. The vines lining the ground of the clearing grew thicker and sprouted brayers in several places. It was clear that the brayers held poison, and everyone silently resolved to avoid them if at all possible. Tesakura raised both hands causing a large plant stock to shoot out of the ground at random places in an attempt to gore the warriors from beneath. Harry used every ounce of agility he possessed to dodge the deadly stocks. On the outside of

the clearing, the Ochus were releasing a pink pollen, this seemed to revitalize any plants that received damage, as well as Tesakura.

All manner of spells were being cast by the warriors in a desperate bid to survive. They didn't have time to summon a GF because of the stocks that kept coming out of the ground. They were vastly outnumbered and it seemed as though nothing they did was having any effect.

"Give up insolent fools!" Yelled Tesakura from the air

Sheyna fired a stream of demolition shells at the woman which shut her up immediately. Tesakura managed to dodge most of the shots, but one caught her on the left side. The blast tore her left wings to shreds, sending her to the ground and making her lose concentration on the stocks. The others used the reprieve to summon their guardians. When she saw the Aeons appear, Tesakura summoned a group of plants to her and formed them into a chrysalis with a thick magic resistant carapace. The guardians made short work of the majority of the plants, leaving only a handful in their wake. When the warriors reappeared there were only three Ochus and a handful of assorted tree soldiers remaining.

Tesakura came out of her chrysalis fully restored. She waved her hands, summoning a wall of plants from the ground to trap the warriors once again.

"You may have destroyed my monsters, but I'm still here!" She shouted "And I will make you suffer for destroying the forest! Prison Cage!"

The vines around the clearing suddenly mutated into six identical monsters. They were all green and looked like living cages. The cage sat atop a four legged monster with glowing red eyes. Before anyone could react, they were all entrapped within the monsters' clutches. Harry tried to blast his way free with an explosion hex, but found that his energy was being drained whenever he attempted to use it. The others were having similar problems whenever they tried to cast a spell. Giving up on spell casting, Harry tried to stab the base of the

cage with his gunblade. As soon as he moved his energy was sapped once again.

“That’s right, the more you struggle the faster your power becomes mine.” Said Tesakura “It won’t be long now. You’ll soon be tapped dry.”

The cages started to drain their energy more rapidly. The process was far from painless and soon the forest was resounding with the cries of the imprisoned warriors. This went on for several minutes. The fighters tried valiantly to fight the process, but it was getting harder and harder just to remain conscious. Inside her Prison Cage Sheyna started to black out. All she could think was how useless she was during this battle. Her shots had been almost pointless and Leviathan was the only real power she had. If she was supposed to be a Lunarian like her mother had said, where was this power, and how was she supposed to release it? The only time she’d been close to ever having an extreme amount of power was during her Limit Break, but everyone got a massive power boost when that happened. She didn’t have any power, because if she did she’d be able to use it.

Suddenly she felt something jerk inside her stomach. She figured it was probably her energy being drained more forcibly. She was about to black out again when she felt it once more. It was like a burning sensation. As her energy left her body the feeling grew and grew until it felt as though she were going to burst. All at once blue fire surrounded her and the Prison Cage started to writhe in agony and released her. Her body seemed to work on autopilot as she floated into the air and raised both hands above her head. A ball of dark blue fire started to form between her palms. Soon she held a ball about ten feet in diameter above her head. She thrust it forward with a cry. “Azure Damnation!”

The massive fireball grew as it headed toward the ground. It obliterated the Ochu and plant soldiers before it even hit them, the heat from the ball was that intense. The only reason the others didn’t die from it was because the Prison Cages were taking the brunt of the damage from it. Tesakura was unable to dodge the incoming fireball and screamed as she burned into ashes. The prison cages soon followed their mistress to the afterlife. The five warriors were a bit

singed, but otherwise were only weak from having their energy drained.

Harry slowly opened his eyes and saw Sheyna floating about twenty feet in the air surrounded by blue fire. All at once the fire died down and the raven haired girl started to plummet toward the ground. Harry was weak, but he couldn't let her be killed. He used what little remaining power he had to cast a levitation charm on her. It slowed her fall enough to prevent major damage when she hit. After that he collapsed into blissful unconsciousness.

...

It was hard to tell how much time had past when everyone started to stir once again. The canopy of trees still obscured the sky above. Harry once again groggily opened his eyes. He shakily stood up and looked around. Andrea and Bastian were getting up as well, Sophia, Ethan and Sheyna were still out.

"How long was I out Seth?" Asked Harry

"Three hours is my best guess" Said the guardian "That plant freak tapped a lot of your energy."

"I can tell." Said Harry weakly, dug into the pack that had miraculously survived the battle and pulled out a Hi-Potion. He chugged it quickly and instantly felt his energy start to return. He followed the potion with an Ether and followed that with a Cura spell. He tossed a few vials to Andrea and Bastian who drank them gratefully. They healed themselves with spells of their own and the three decided to wait for the others to wake up.

"That was some fight." Said Harry "How many times have we almost died now?"

"I've lost count." Said Bastian

"It doesn't matter." Said Andrea "We're alive."

"We need to get stronger." Said Harry "If that one fiend gave us so much trouble, imagine what will happen if we fight Kuja."

"We get stronger after every fight." Said Andrea "That's the thing about fiends, whenever they die, their slayer gets a portion of their power. Haven't you noticed that you're a little stronger and a little faster after every battle?"

"I have." Said Harry "I was wondering about that. I was going to ask Grindlewald, but the bastard was too busy throwing curses at me to answer a question."

"Most people call it experience." Said Bastian "It varies depending on the fiend, but basically if we keep getting into fights like this we'll keep getting stronger."

"As long as we don't die." Said Andrea "If you die, even if you're revived, you lose a good deal of strength gained from fiends. By the same token if you kill someone who has a lot of experience you get a portion of theirs when they die."

"How does it work exactly?" Said Harry "I mean why do fiends give their killers strength?"

"No one really knows." Said Sophia "That's the way it's always been."

There was a moan from one of the others. They turned to see Ethan slowly sitting up. Harry went over to him and gave him a few potions followed by a Curaga spell.

"Thanks." He said gratefully "How did we beat that bitch?"

"Sheyna." Said Harry "I'm not sure exactly what she did, but there was a lot of blue fire."

"I'll have to thank her when she wakes up then." Said Ethan

Soon Sophia woke up and she was healed like the others. They waited two more hours for Sheyna to awaken, but when she didn't they decided to carry her and keep going. Harry picked her up and

placed her arms over his shoulders so that she was on his back, he then used his hands to get her legs in place around his waist. He used a mild sticking charm to keep her in place so that he could keep his arms free. Since he was carrying Sheyna he gave the supplies as well as Sheyna's weapons to Bastian. Soon they resumed their trek and headed north, toward the Alexandria Plateau.

The forest was now calm without Tesakura's influence, so they didn't run into too much trouble, other than a few trolls and Grats. They spent a night in the forest, using a couple of cottages for their camp site. The next day Sheyna was still unconscious, so she was carried once again. Eventually they came to the base of the steep cliff which Alexandria sat on top of. There was a massive waterfall coming from the top of it and behind the waterfall was a cave. Andrea reasoned that the cave most likely lead upward, so they went in.

The cave was typical, having grey stone walls and a few stalactites and stalagmites here and there. The fiend population was almost nonexistent, save for a few vampire bats and annoying blue bugs with dragonfly wings, Bastian called them Bite Bugs. Andrea had been right about the cave heading upward. By the end of the day they'd made it to the top of the cave, which came out right at the source of the waterfall. In the distance a large city was visible. Its main feature was the medieval castle that sat in its center. The rest of the city seemed very modern save for the castle.

"We finally made it." Said Sophia

"We should find a place to stay, then Sophia and I will go into the castle." Said Andrea

"Wait, why just you and Sophia?" Asked Harry

"Sheyna could go to if she wakes up." Said Andrea

"But that still doesn't explain why only you can go." Said Harry

"Alexandria has strange rules." Said Ethan

"They don't have a very high opinion of men." Said Bastian "There are laws putting restrictions on what men can and can't do inside the city."

"That's weird." Said Harry "It isn't that bad is it?"

"You'll see." Said Andrea cryptically and Harry couldn't help but think he didn't really want to know.

...

Draco sat in a dark room tied to a hard wooden chair. He'd been put into this room everyday for the last two weeks. He'd been given Verituserum and made to tell everything he knew about the Death Eaters, Voldemort, Potter and anything else that was relevant about Wizarding Britain. Now they just seemed to be trying to break him, but he was a Malfoy and he wasn't going to give in.

"This will be easier if you cooperate Mr. Malfoy." Said the voice of one of his captors.

"Go shag a hippogriff." Spat Draco

"I prefer women Mr. Malfoy." Said the voice calmly "Now stop resisting our attempts to probe your mind, you've been put under a memory charm and we only want to break it to find out what you were made to forget."

"I'm not letting you fiddle around in my mind!" Yelled Draco

"You leave us no choice then." Said the man "We'll be administering a potion that will relax your mind. It will be in gas form, so there's no chance of you not taking it."

"You can't do that!" Said Draco indignantly

"We can and we are." Said the voice, a yellow gas seeped into the room and made its way toward the bound wizard. It was under a homing charm to insure that it reached its target. Draco tried to hold his breath, but the chair he was tied to sent a wave of pain though

him causing him to cry out. As soon as he did he inadvertently breathed in the gas. He started to feel light headed and groggy.

He was barely aware of a voice saying, "Legilimens!" and then images started. He was standing in the corridor of Azkaban. Weasley was there, but he was different. His eyes were dark purple instead of the sparkling blue they normally were. His voice was different too, more harsh and holding a malicious undertone. They dueled and Draco lost. Then he was bound and dragged through the corridors of Azkaban. Weasley said something about needing a possible human shield. Next he was pulled before the Dark Lord. Weasley seemed to somehow frighten Voldemort. They were talking about Horcruxes and shattered souls. Weasley said he was a missing piece of the Dark Lord's soul and that immortality wasn't worth the sacrifice of power.

The two were locked in a staring contest, and then Weasley used Legilimancy on the Dark Lord. He then said something about a ritual. Next Weasley took Draco's left arm and touched his wand to the Dark Mark. As he relived the memory, pain shot through his arm, just as it had that night. Out of nowhere the Weasley girl appeared and her brother handed her over to the Dark Lord after binding her. Then Weasley said something about reuniting the soul and gaining ultimate power. After that Draco had been stunned and Obliviated.

He came out of his trance to find himself back in the dark room.

"Thank you Mr. Malfoy, that was very informative." Said the mysterious voice. "You'll be returning to your cell now, we may have a better use for you later."

Before Draco could protest he was portkeyed back to his cell. "At least I won't have to go through that again." He thought morosely, wondering what in Merlin's name these people wanted with him, they'd pretended to be a branch of the U.S. Wizarding government, but that had been a front. They were really a group dedicated to the destruction of dark wizards and witches. That was all he'd been able to gather so far, but it was a start. He sighed and walked over to his steel cot. All he could do now was wait and see what his fate would be.

...

Ginny watched the black phoenix carefully. It was a very odd bird. In the last two weeks it had done nothing but sit on its perch and watch her. It didn't go off to hunt, and Flamel had told her that it refused to eat anything he or his wife offered it. She'd tried talking to it again, but it rarely answered and if it did they were always vague. For example, Ginny had asked it what it was. In response it said, "I was made to protect." Ginny hadn't been satisfied with this answer, but that was all she'd gotten. The only question she'd received a satisfactory answer to was asking the creature his name. It turned out that his name was Atrumdolor, which meant black suffering. When she'd asked him why his name was that, he'd once again said nothing.

She stopped looking at the phoenix and looked at herself in the mirror. She took one of her scarred hands and traced the smooth lines along her face. She had two parallel marks on each side of her face, going from her temple and earlobe down to her chin and neck. There was a circle carved into the middle of her forehead and three parallel lines going through it. The rest of her body was similarly marked, and Nicholas had informed her that there was little to be done about the marks. Every time a glamour charm was cast on her; it would last about a second and then be absorbed by her damaged core. Worst of all were the visions. It seemed that since the ritual she'd developed an even deeper connection to Voldemort. When he'd merged with Ron, she'd seen the entire thing, as well as felt extreme pain from every one of her scars. Now she could appreciate why Harry was always in a bad mood after one of the visions.

Her vocal chords had started to heal; now she could speak short sentences in a raspy voice that didn't sound like her own. Paranelle had assured her that this wound would heal, although it would leave a very nasty scar. In the meantime Nicholas was teaching her the only form of magic she could practice, Occlumency. This was to serve as a means to keep Voldemort's visions at bay as well as help restrain her writhing core. As it was she had to get a dose of magic everyday. Usually from Atrum, as she called him.

She sighed silently, thinking of what she could possibly do now. She wanted to be in a position to fight against Tom. But as she was there was little she could do.

...

Voldemort walked through the halls of Azkaban, Henry Potter at his side. They were heading toward the warded door near where Henry had been imprisoned. The man had told Voldemort that it took a great deal of power to break the wards around the door. Apparently they'd been cast, first by Merlin and then reinforced quite a few times over the years. First by each of the four founders and again by countless other wizards including Nicholas Flamel, Grindlewald and Dumbledore. Whatever lay behind the doors must be extremely powerful to require such drastic security measures.

"This is it." Said Henry "The wards start about five feet from this point, go any further and you'll be fried to a crisp."

"I think you should leave Potter." Said the Dark Lord "This could get very violent."

"I wasn't planning on staying Tom." Said Henry "Don't get yourself killed, better men than you have tried and failed to break those wards."

"I am no longer a mere man Potter." Said Voldemort "I have become what men only dream of becoming, I am a god!"

"Even gods can be killed Tom." Said Henry "You'd do well to remember that, and not let your power go to your head. If you remember a one-year-old boy caused your last downfall and that was at the height of your power."

"Do not lecture me Potter." Said Voldemort beginning to get annoyed "You have many uses, but do not think that you are irreplaceable."

"You wouldn't dare kill me." Said Henry "I have too much information, and even with your new power, you still can't penetrate my mind's defenses."

Voldemort glared at him as he walked away. There wasn't much he could say to refute that claim, as it was true. He resolved to deal with Potter later. Right now he had more important things to do. He switched his vision to that of magical sight and looked at the massive wards. They were impressive, but he could break them. He focused some of his magic and thrust it at the wards. There was a crackling sound as the magicks collided with each other. That one burst of magic had caused the more recent wards to crumble. The older ones held though. He focused more magic and began to hammer at the wards more forcefully. Soon enough the wards were down to only one final layer.

He figured that this layer must have belonged to Merlin. He hammered at it, but using his current power it wasn't enough. He focused even more power, getting to about one third of his full strength and hammered the wards again. This time there was a sound like thunder booming throughout the entire fortress. The wards had finally fallen and Voldemort stepped forward to claim what lay beyond the door.

Once through he found a chamber with an alter in the middle. Several runes adorned the walls of the chamber and the alter. On the alter sat a glowing purple crystal. Voldemort scanned the runes and read the message written within.

"Thou who wishes to return the world to its rightful state, bring the key to the place where demons loose their way. Then the moon shall cry a bloody tear and the world will be restored."

Voldemort had no idea what this meant, but it did give him something to work for. He'd promised his enemies a year to prepare, they had fifty weeks left. Training his Death Eaters and the various other dark factions wouldn't take nearly that long, therefore he could devote most of his resources to unlocking this new mystery. It seemed as though the ultimate power was connected to this riddle, and he was determined to solve it.

...

A/N: Sorry to those of you who got used to seeing an update every few days. Again I will remind you that the updates will come every Saturday. I may update more often, but that's how it has to be right now. I am once again humbly asking everyone to leave at least one review. I know more people read this than actually review it and I appreciate your interest in the story, but a review lets me know what you think and helps me write a better story in the end. If you don't review don't be disappointed in whatever turns the story takes. I won't guarantee that saying you do or don't like something will make me change it, I do have a general outline for the plot that I will more or less stick to, but it is good to know what everyone thinks. Therefore PLEASE LEAVE A REVIEW!

Capitol of the Matriarchs

Merlin stood atop one of the many towers of the Crystal Citadel. He had been avoiding the coming meeting, but he knew that he couldn't put it off any longer. He heard three sets of footsteps behind him and turned around. Two black haired men, one with long straight hair and the other with an unruly mass of hair and wearing glasses, were followed by a very attractive red haired woman.

"What did you do?" Roared James Potter angrily

"What needed to be done." Said Merlin simply

"That's all you're going to say?" Asked Sirius angrily "Do you have any idea what you're putting him through? What he'll have to face in the end?"

"I am aware of what the boy will face." Said Merlin "But he was the only logical choice; surely you wouldn't have me settle for the alternative."

"What would be so bad about it?" Asked Lilly "If Zidane wants to go against the forces of Life it's his business."

"Life and Death both need to exist." Said Merlin "Zidane is unhappy with what Life put him through, he had been happy, but for doing something that he had no choice in he had to lose it all. He wants to build an army to assault the realm where the Forces of Life reside. If he wins the universe as we know it will cease to exist, balance will be lost and everything will collapse into chaos."

"And Harry is supposed to stop him?" asked James incredulously. "He's already supposed to stop Voldemort; he doesn't need anymore on his plate!"

"You know the worlds are merging, don't you?" Asked Merlin

"Yes." Said James not sure where Merlin was going with this

"You also know that Voldemort had intended to use Harry for a ritual to increase his power."

"Get to the point." Snapped James impatiently, this earned him a slap in the arm and a glare from Lilly "What?"

"You may be angry with him but it's still Merlin you're talking to."

"So?" Asked James

"You all have a right to be upset with me." Said Merlin "I am merely a human like you all, I do not know why wizards hold me in such high regard, anyone has the potential to be as powerful as I was."

"You still haven't answered the question." Said Sirius

"Quite right," said Merlin "Your son is much more than either of you know."

"What does that mean?" Asked Lilly

"I'd rather not say at this time." Said Merlin "But if anyone can stop Zidane it's him, and Zidane knows it."

"Yes I do know it." Said Zidane startling them all "But he won't, and even if he does it won't matter to me."

"What do you mean?" Asked James

"He'll just get the same reward I did, and either way I'll be free," said Zidane. "So it's win-win for me. I'd much rather complete my plans though, so to that end I'll be needing all of you to get back to work."

They couldn't argue with Zidane, as it was his realm they were in. All four of them headed back into the castle, but on his way down Merlin stopped.

"You do know what your brother has done don't you?" He asked Zidane

“He won’t be a problem.” said Zidane. “Even with his new power I’m still much stronger than he is.”

“You’re going to let him get away with what he’s trying to do?” Asked Merlin

“He won’t be able to control it.” Said Zidane “I’ve got one of the missing keys with me, so the best he’ll manage is to wake it up, and maybe even release it. That will just help me in the long run.”

“You’re insane.” Said Merlin

“There’s a fine line between insanity and genius.” Said Zidane

Merlin simply nodded and headed back into the castle, he had a vital process of the merger to oversee and he’d been slacking in his post recently. A key phase was fast approaching and things needed to be done.

...

Harry pondered his current situation as he walked toward the city, still carrying Sheyna on his back. He was still stuck in an alien world, but he wasn’t uncomfortable here. The only reason he even missed his home was because of his friends there. Although he didn’t have many of them left. As far as he could tell Ginny and Hermione were dead, Ron was possessed by Voldemort and was probably beyond saving. Neville was most likely going to have to fight Voldemort, and Harry didn’t think he would win. Luna was probably still Luna and that said it all. He hoped Remus and Tonks were alright as well as the Weasley twins. He quickly snapped out of his thoughts as something rushed out of the forest to the right of the path. A very large green dragon stood blocking their way. Harry made sure Sheyna was secure on his back and pulled his gunblade out of its sheath at his hip. The others were drawing their weapons as well.

The dragon snarled at them and tilted its head back in order to gather energy for a breath attack. Andrea didn’t give it a chance to unleash the attack. She leapt forward and brought her blade down right between the creature’s eyes. The blade hit the hard scales and

managed to knock a few loose, causing a gash to form where the strike landed, but the creature was far from dead. It used its head like a battering ram and sent Andrea flying into a nearby tree with one well placed head but. Sophia and Ethan cast a Blizzaga spell at the same time aiming for the dragon's chest. The beast used its wings like a shield and blocked the spells. The distraction from the magic gave Bastian and Harry a chance to get close to the monster. They both slashed at the beast's exposed flank causing it to roar in pain. It lashed out with its tail tripping the two of them. Harry twisted in the air so that he landed on his stomach, as not to crush the girl on his back. Harry brought his blade up just in time to block a claw thrust from the dragon. The beast then lunged at Bastian biting him on the arm.

Andrea staggered up from her position at the foot of the tree and saw the monster bite Bastian on the arm. She cast a Blizzaga spell at the monster, catching it off guard and freezing its hindquarters solid. It jerked its head and threw Bastian to the side, releasing him from its jaws. It used its fire breath to melt the ice around its hind legs, but this gave both Sophia and Harry an opening. The wizard rose to his feet and jabbed the point of his gunblade right into the nape of the dragon's neck. Sophia cast a Thundaga spell which was amplified by the rising water vapor in the air. The spell hit just as Harry pulled the trigger on the gunblade. The reaction was spectacular. The dragon was literally blown apart and fried at the same time. Dragon parts flew everywhere and Harry and Sheyna were covered in blood and guts.

"Ahhh!" Cried Harry as the various fluids dribbled down his body.

"Well you did need a shower." said Sophia amusedly.

"This isn't funny." said Harry "What if that thing is poisonous?"

"It's not." said Andrea "So just clean yourself off and let's start heading for the city again.

"A little help here guys." Said Bastian weakly from where he'd landed. His arm was sporting a large abrasion, going from his right bicep to his right shoulder. His shoulder also looked as though it was dislocated. His left hand was absently rubbing his ribs, but was sometimes moved to the right side of his neck.

"That looks painful." Said Ethan thoughtfully

"Well if a dragon bit you and then slung you away like a rag doll it would hurt too." said Bastian.

"Curaga!" said Sophia as she cast the healing spell. Bastian's wounds started to close and his bones gradually reset themselves. When the spell had run its course all that remained was a jagged scar in the shape of teeth on Bastian's right arm.

By this time Harry had cast the Scurgify spell a few dozen times on himself and Sheyna, now he was once again clean. The group gathered their hurriedly dropped equipment and started walking again. Soon Harry was once again lost in thought. This time it was about his new friends. They were an interesting group of people, all very different yet each having some similarities. For Andrea, Ethan, Sophia and Bastian their similarities were in their attitude in combat. They had all trained and worked together for sometime and even though Bastian and Sophia had been gone from SeeD for a while, they still maintained their training. Sheyna held similarities with both Sophia and Andrea. She was in the middle ground between the two. Sophia always tried to keep everyone's spirits high and to a degree Sheyna did as well. Andrea was always about business and getting the job done. Sheyna could be like that too, but she wasn't as extreme as Andrea. Ethan and Bastian seemed to be good friends, always ragging on each other or reminiscing about old times.

There hadn't been much of the latter lately though, ever since the destruction of Bessaid Garden the whole group had been subdued. This was understandable, that place had been both a school, home and workplace for the four friends, and Harry and Sheyna had spent some time there as well. Harry guessed they felt much like he'd feel if Hogwarts were ever destroyed. If that happened he didn't know what he'd do.

They kept on walking and finally managed to reach the city after another half hour. At the gates four women wearing armor met them. They addressed Sophia and Andrea, while sending the men, Harry in particular, a nasty look.

"What business do you have in Alexandria?" asked one of the women. "And why is that man carrying the girl?"

"We just want a place to stay for a few days." said Sophia "We had to come through Evil Forest and our friend was hurt on the way through."

"You made it through the forest?" asked another of the guards in astonishment.

"It was hard, but we managed." Said Harry

"Silence male!" Yelled another guard turning her spear on Harry

"I can talk if I want to!" Yelled the wizard indignantly "And if you keep pointing that spear at me I'll-,"

"Cry like the scared little boy you are." said Andrea quickly "Sorry about him, he hasn't been trained yet."

"Typical." Spat the first guard "Very well, we'll allow you to enter on the condition that you keep them" She pointed her spear at the men "in check".

"We'll do that." Said Sophia quickly, Harry was about to comment once again.

When they were out of the guards earshot the wizard exploded "What the bloody hell!" He said heatedly "I know you said men were oppressed here but this is just ridiculous. I can't even talk? And what was that about training me?"

"Do you see any men walking around?" Asked Andrea

Harry looked around. The street was bustling with people, some weren't even human, but upon further inspection he noticed that they all were decidedly female. The only males in the street were him, Ethan and Bastian. He spied a fountain and atop it was a statue of a large man in armor.

"If they hate men so much, why do they have a statue of one?" Asked Harry "Or is that just a really ugly woman?"

They went up to the statue and read the nameplate

Adlebert Steiner

General First Class: Knights of Pluto

Served under Queen Braine, Queen Garnet

Circa 5000 years BM

"What's 5000 BM mean?" Asked Harry

"5000 years before the mergers." said Andrea "Meaning it's been a little over 8000 years since he was alive."

"I swear you guys keep your history really well." Said Harry "Hermione would love this place." He added quietly

"This still doesn't explain why there's a man there." Said Ethan

"It's a part of their history." said Sophia "It had to have been here for a long time. Alexandria wasn't always so hostile toward men."

"I wonder what changed it." Said Bastian

They came to a hotel and walked inside. There was a man behind the desk. He smiled in a forced way and greeted the group.

"Hello mistresses, how may I serve you today?" He asked

"We need three rooms for the next week." Said Andrea

"Very well mistress, will your man servants be staying with you, or will they require more appropriate lodging."

"We are not-," Started Bastian, but was cut off by Sophia stomping heavily on his foot.

"They'll be rooming with us." She said quickly

"Very well, this way please." He said with his false joviality.

Just out of curiosity Harry probed the man's mind. He wanted to know how men dealt with the oppression here.

"One of these days I'm not gonna take this crap anymore." The man was thinking "These stupid whores think they can just run all over us, I'll show them, I'll show them all!"

Harry pulled out of his mind at that point. He figured it was more of the same. The man showed them to three rooms sitting side by side.

"Which one do I put her in?" Harry asked

"Just pick one." said Andrea walking into the middle room. Harry went into the room to its right. There were two full beds a bureau and a bathroom. The window in the room had a nice view of the castle as well as the alley behind the building. Harry deposited Sheyna onto the bed near the door and went back out to grab their things. He enlarged the two packs and sat them down at the foot of Sheyna's bed.

"What happened to you?" He mused aloud. It was very confusing, all of a sudden Sheyna had been engulfed in blue flames, and then she totally destroyed Tesakura and her plant minions. Next she was unconscious. Harry figured that it was probably some kind of Limit Break or some sort of spell. Whatever it was it had saved their lives.

He sighed and flopped onto the adjacent bed. He really needed some rest.

...

Antym stocked through the lower hallways of Baron Castle. The place was ancient and this fact was evident by the moss covering the stone.

No one usually walked through this section of the castle, and it was here he came when he needed solace, whenever Griever was dormant and Mia wasn't manipulating him. He could actually form his own thoughts and make his own actions, and when this happened he always felt an overwhelming amount of guilt. The guilt usually gave way to anger, which then turned into a vengeful rage and finally culminating in a feeling of extreme hatred for one thing and one thing alone, Admiral Dincht. That man was the head of Garden, that man was the one who had given him the mission which ultimately led him to becoming The Knight. And when Antym had asked him for help, he'd said that it wouldn't be in the best interest of Garden to associate with a Sorceress' lapdog.

He clenched his fists as the memories came back unbidden, That horrible day, when he'd been made to swear allegiance to the Sorceress Mia, who in turn allied herself with a group he considered as his sworn enemies. He'd gone on to infiltrate Balamb Garden during the annual gathering there. Mia had wanted him stronger and picked up on the information about Griever from his mind.

"You can't be a weak knight." She had told him "I want you to be able to defeat any enemy, and strong as you are, you still need more power."

"I don't need anymore power." said Antym "What I don't have Bahaumut more than makes up for."

"And have you been able to use the dragon since becoming my knight?" She asked

"We just have a few differences to work out." Said Antym

"I read your thoughts Antym." said Mia "I know that Bahaumut has sworn to never follow you as long as you remain my knight. That is why you need to replace him."

"There are only two GF stronger than Bahaumut." Said Antym "And they both are junctioned."

“There are three GF stronger than Bahaumut.” Said Mia “And you know which one I need you to acquire.”

“It’s impossible.” said Antym “The security around it won’t let anyone near it.”

“You know how to get through it.” Said Mia “I know you do, don’t make me force you to do it.”

“You can’t force me to-,” He started before he felt a jolt of pain course through his entire body.

“I can make the pain go away.” Said Mia sweetly “Just do as I ask”

“Impossible...can’t be done...” Wheezed Antym through the pain

“It can and it will.” Said Mia making the pain even more excruciating, Antym cried out and she smiled in satisfaction.

“I’ll do it.” He finally said once she released him from the pain. That had been the last time he’d ever spoken out against her orders. The pain was just too much for any mortal to bear.

The memories continued to spiral through his mind as he walked the dark halls. He’d returned to Bessaid Garden as if he were coming back from a mission. Dincht had kept the specifics of what he was asked to do quiet. No one knew what he was there for, or that he was now a traitor. His friends were happy to see him and he’d gone about life as if nothing was amiss. Then the Gardens had converged near the Galbadian coast. All ranking SeeDs were allowed to board the legendary facility where there had been a grand celebration. It was a time for the SeeDs to kick back and enjoy life outside a battlefield. Not him though, as his friends had proceeded to the party he’d fallen back. Andrea and Bastian had both caught it, but he’d ushered the former to go on ahead. He didn’t want her to see what he was about to do, he couldn’t face it.

“What’s up man?” Asked Bastian

“There are a lot of things you don’t know about me Bastian.” Said Antym

“I’ve known you since we were twelve Antym.” Said Bastian “We’ve been friends for most of that time, I think I know quite a bit about you, but we all have secrets. This still doesn’t explain why you aren’t heading to the party. You’ve been gone for over two months and I know you were looking forward to spending time with Andrea later.”

“Not anymore.” Said Antym

“You two broke up?” Asked Bastian

“I need you to follow me.” Said Antym

“Okay” Said Bastian confused “Heading to the Training Center?”

“Something like that.” Said Antym

They walked for several minutes, until they came to the corridor leading to the main offices of the Garden.

“Umm...Antym why are we here?” asked Bastian.

Antym thrust his hands forward and cast a Stop Spell on his friend. Bastian’s eyes widened as he saw Antym pull out what was clearly a compact explosive. The bomb was only the size of a Blitzball, but it was still powerful enough to blow the entire place sky high.

“I don’t want to do this.” Said Antym “But I don’t really have a choice, that spell will wear off in five minutes, the bomb’s timer is set for eight, you need to stop it before it explodes. I really am sorry Bastian, if you see me again after this we’ll be enemies, I just wish it didn’t have to be this way.”

He then headed for the elevator. Instead of hitting any buttons he climbed up through the vent and headed up the shaft. There was a hidden door up there and he found it quickly. The access panel required a code to be entered; he simply shocked it with a weak thunder spell until the lock released. This caused the alarm to sound

and he knew he had to hurry. He jumped through the doors and landed inside the room beyond. In a case at the end of the room was what he sought. It was a black stone disk with a lion's head depicted on it. There were lasers covering the way in, but he didn't have time to be subtle. He cast a Haste spell on himself and ran right through the trip lasers. The room started to seal up, but he kept going. When he got to the case he melted the exterior with a Firaga spell.

"Alright Bahaumut it's time for you to go." He said focusing on the GF

"It is tragic what happened to you." Said the Dragon King "Be warned young one, Griever is not to be trifled with, he is unstable, to junction him is to give up your own mind."

"I wouldn't have to if you'd just cooperate." Said Antym

"I do not serve those that have lost sight of what is right." Said Bahaumut

"Right and wrong is in the eyes of the beholder." said Antym expelling the GF from his mind. He took the stone and placed it where Griever's had been, he then took Griever's junction stone and absorbed it into his body.

"Freedom!" Cried a voice that sounded like a lion roaring

"You'll be junctioned to me from now on Griever." Said Antym

"You wish to wield my power?" Asked the guardian "So be it, but you will be merely a vessel. Your only purpose is to serve the Sorceress, and that is what you shall do."

"What?" Said Antym, but it was too late. Griever had started to take control. Antym fell to his knees as pain wracked his whole body. He would find later that this was when his hair had gone from black to dark silver, and his eyes from dark teal to a steely grey-blue color. What he could tell immediately though was that he was much, much stronger. The security measures of the room had sealed him inside; he raised a hand and blasted a hole right through them with a Flare

spell. He then cast Haste once more and quickly made it out of the Garden.

And that was the last time he'd been completely himself. He'd only gone downhill from there. Killing a sorceress, fighting simply for the sake of fighting, directly contributing to the destruction of the one place that felt like home, it was a terrible feeling. His thoughts were interrupted by voices down the corridor.

"I found it fair and square when we raided the ruins around Giran's place." Said one voice "I aint selling it to you."

"You don't even use a sword." Said another voice indignantly "All you do is run around swinging the thing like it's some kind of bat, give it to a real swordsman like me."

"I like the way it looks, see all the jewels in the hilt?"

"It's made to be a weapon, so use it like a weapon."

"What's going on here?" asked Antym commandingly. Two Baron Soldiers looked up startled. They knew who the Knight was and knew that he wasn't to be crossed.

"Just a friendly disagreement, sir." said the soldier holding the sword. It was a nice looking weapon, the blade was extremely sharp and it looked as though it was very sturdy. The hilt and guard were both gold and encrusted with jewels. When Antym looked at the sword it started to glow with a dark red light, but it didn't seem as though the soldiers had seen it.

"Hand me that sword." Said Antym

"Excuse me sir?" Asked the first soldier

"You heard him." said the second soldier in an attempt to gain favor "He said hand him the sword."

Reluctantly the soldier handed Antym the weapon, the knight swung it a few times experimentally. It felt natural in his hand, like it was made

to fit there. He unclipped his gunblade and used the two blades simultaneously. The power he felt from the sword was phenomenal.

"I'll be taking this." said Antym "This weapon is too good for the likes of you."

"You can't just." Started the first soldier, but he was silenced when his head was severed from his body.

"I won't tolerate insubordination." He said to the second soldier

"Oh no sir I would never dream of doing that, your wish is my command."

"And I hate suck-ups." He said before dispatching the second soldier.

After killing the soldiers the sword started to glow with a white aura. Soon the blade started to change. It went from being a normal, albeit strongly magical and jewel encrusted, sword to a gunblade with a glowing white blade and golden hilt. The name Godric Gryffindor had faded away. What Antym held was the sword's true form, which not even Gryffindor had known about. The seal placed on the weapon so long ago had been cracking under Harry's use, but with the last stroke of use it had been completely abolished.

Antym spoke one word, not knowing where it had come from, but knowing that it was the sword's name. "Atma,"

He walked back down the corridor feeling refreshed. The memories didn't return and he was thankful for that. He had a new mission to prepare for anyway. For some reason the emperor wanted them to go to Myst, but not just any place in Myst. He wanted them to find the lafa Tree. This was no doubt one of Kuja's schemes of that much he was sure. The question was why they would need to go there."

...

"Come on Harry you can't just sit here all day." Said Ethan

"I'm fine Ethan." Said Harry "Not like I can run around and enjoy the sights of the city is it?"

"You could turn invisible." Said Ethan "I know you don't want to leave her alone in case she wakes up, but you've been here a whole day. At least take a few hours to get some fresh air, I'll stay here if it will make you feel better."

"Fine." said Harry. "I think I'll do some fiend hunting, that always clears my mind up."

"There you go." Said Ethan "I'll be sure to find you if she wakes up while you're gone."

"Alright." said Harry leaving the room. When he was gone for about five minutes Ethan sat down on the bed where Harry had been.

"I wonder if you two will ever..." he started to say to the sleeping girl. "Eh, only time will tell."

Suddenly Ethan started to feel extremely sleepy, this was odd because he'd felt wide awake a few minutes before. Soon he was fast asleep on the bed.

A shadowy figure appeared in the corner of the room.

"This should make things interesting," he said as he walked over to the sleeping girl. "Now that Potter is gone I can do this."

The man pulled back his hood to reveal long silver hair. Kuja looked down at the girl with a smirk on his face.

"I would use the Imperius Curse, but Potter might detect that, so there's always a better way." He took out a syringe and injected it into the girl's neck. "Sleep well young heiress, you'll be helping me very soon, weather you want to or not."

With that he disappeared and almost immediately Ethan woke up.

"What the hell?" He mumbled "I must have dosed off."

...

Harry jumped backwards avoiding the claw thrust from the Jade Dragon. He then had to duck a fire blast from a second one. He'd ventured deep into the forest. This was the best place to find strong fiends, and fighting them would make him stronger. There were four dragons surrounding him and he was determined to kill them all, or die trying. He went on the offensive rushing at the dragon directly in front of him. The beast seemed to be taken aback at a human who was brave enough to run at it head on. It opened its mouth and began gathering fire. Harry cast a reflect spell around its mouth and when it released the fire it burned its face and eyes effectively blinding it. He leapt into the air and brought his gunblade down full force onto the dragon's skull. He pulled the trigger just as the sword impacted causing more pressure to be exerted.

The blow managed to pierce the dragon's brain and kill it instantly. The fall of their comrade enraged the other three dragons and they charged at the wizard. Harry fired a quick succession of blasting hexes knocking them all off their feet. He then shifted invisible further confusing the creatures. Using his magic to increase his speed he rushed the monsters slashing with all he was worth. Soon pieces of dragon littered the forest. He continued hunting fiends for several hours. Drakes, Bombs and more dragons all felt his wrath. Soon the fiends were running when they saw him, so he chased them. He lost track of time and didn't realize how long he'd been in the forest until it started to get dark.

"I hope no one worried about me." He said aloud. He made his way back to the city gates, shifting invisible along the way. He waked right past the guards and headed back to the inn. He found Sophia and Andrea sitting in the lobby discussing something.

"Where the hell is he?" asked Sophia "He was supposed to be back three hours ago."

"You know how he is." said Andrea. "He gets distracted easily."

“He knows men can’t just run around Alexandria,” said Sophia. “What if he gets arrested?”

“We’ll bail him out when we go to the castle tomorrow.” said Andrea “I just hope the queen listens to us, she might think we’re just pulling her leg.”

Ethan walked into the lobby and sat down next to Andrea “Any of you seen Harry?” He asked “I told him to take a break from his vigil, and now he’s been gone all day.”

“Where did he say he was going?” Asked Andrea

“Fiend hunting,” Said Ethan

“Well he’s back now.” Said Andrea

“What, where?” Asked Ethan

“He’s standing by near the stairs with a shocked look on his face since he’s invisible.” said Andrea with an uncharacteristic smirk.

Harry reappeared and looked directly at the SeeD “How?” He asked

“You weren’t exactly silent when you came in.” Said Andrea “And seeing a door open on its own is suspicious too, especially when said door closes ever so quietly. The rest was just speculation.”

“You’re good.” Said Harry “Sorry I stayed out all day Ethan, I got a little carried away.”

“I see.” said Ethan looking at all the blood covering Harry’s clothes.

“I’m going to take a bath.” Said Harry “I don’t suppose Sheyna woke up yet?”

“Nope,” Said Ethan “She did move a few times though, so she should wake up any time now.”

“That’s good.” said Harry “I was starting to get worried.”

He left them in the lobby and went into his and Sheyna's room. She was still sleeping peacefully. Looking at her gave Harry an odd feeling, as if something were wrong that he should notice, but couldn't. He did a Legilimancy scan, but didn't see anything amiss. He was probably just being paranoid.

...

A few hours later Sheyna opened her eyes. She was in a strange room. The last thing she remembered was being inside the Prison Cage and then a lot of blue light and heat. Someone was sitting on the bed across from hers and as her vision cleared she realized it was Harry.

"You're awake!" He said relieved "If you hadn't woken up soon we'd have had to find a doctor."

"What happened?" She asked weakly

"I'm not sure." said Harry "We were all in the Prison Cages and then yours exploded. I didn't see a lot, but I remember you being surrounded by blue fire and obliterating the clearing."

"I did what?" She asked astonished

"You don't remember?" He asked

"No." She said "The last thing I remember is thinking that I wasn't a Lunarian like..." She stopped realizing she'd said too much. She didn't want anyone to know that little piece of information, but in her groggy state she'd let it slip.

"A what?" Asked Harry

"Nothing." she said quickly. A pain shot through her neck and she put her hand there. "Did I hit the ground wrong or something?"

"No, I levitated you before you hit, you landed softly." Said Harry

"My neck hurts." She said

"Maybe one of those Bite Bugs nipped you when we were in the cave, that or being in one position too long."

"Maybe." said Sheyna

"Here." Said Harry, handing her a potion "That should take care of it."

"Thanks Harry." She said downing the potion. Her neck immediately stopped hurting and she felt a little more energized.

"We're in Alexandria." He told her "Weird place if you ask me."

"The 'men are inferiors' rule getting to you?" She asked amusedly

"They called us man servants!" Said Harry "That's like the male equivalent of a concubine."

"No it isn't" Said Sheyna "It just means that you have to do whatever you're told."

"I am not a servant." Said Harry

"No one said you were." said Sheyna "You just have to act humble when around women in this city."

"You still haven't told me what a Lunasian is." Said Harry

"Lunarian." said Sheyna without thinking

"Ah ha!" Said Harry "I knew you said something like that."

"Crap." She muttered

"What?" Asked Harry

"It's just one of those things that I didn't want anyone to know." She said "You should know all about that."

“Okay.” Said Harry quickly

“I’ll tell you.” She said “If you tell me what happened on Great Glacier.”

Harry considered this. He needed to know what exactly a Lunarian was; if Sheyna was one and she was going to be traveling with him it seemed important. On the other hand he’d have to divulge what had happened on Great Glacier, and he still felt uneasy about it.

“Why?” Asked Seth

“Why what?” Asked Harry

“Why don’t you want to tell anyone about that.” said the guardian
“They do need to know. Especially since that guy will come looking for the Sorceress’ power.”

“Okay.” Said Harry aloud “Grindlewald just dropped me in the middle of the glacier and I think he made me forget that I could apparate. Anyway I wandered around for a few weeks until I found a house. I went to sleep and had a dream about being a wolf, I think my magic took over and turned me into one, because when I woke up that’s what I was. I couldn’t turn back so I decided to stay that way since it was a lot warmer. I could still use magic, so it wasn’t too much of a problem. Then this guy came. He thought I was a fiend and attacked me. We fought and he won. I woke up in a cave and this woman was there. She said she was Sorceress Vadne and that she didn’t have much time left.”

“Then she got all edgy and took out this crystal. She focused on it and it turned blue.” He touched the crystal around his neck. “This was that crystal. She said it contained a good deal of her power and that she didn’t want either of the other Sorceresses to wild it. She gave it to me and then took out this gunblade. She told me that I should be able to feel my way back to my human form. I tried, but it didn’t work. Then the guy from before showed up. They fought and it looked like she was going to win, but it was all just for show. He was toying with her. I couldn’t even help, she’d put me under a Stop Spell.” His voice started to shake as memories from both this time and the Astronomy

tower came flooding back. "I-I couldn't even, couldn't even help. After she died I turned back into myself. I grabbed the gunblade and started to fight the guy. He was really strong and we fought to an almost stalemate, but in the end I realized he was just toying with me too. Before he could kill me Grindlewald showed up and stunned him."

"So that necklace is Sorceress power?" Asked Sheyna

"That's what Vadne told me." Said Harry fingering the necklace "Your turn, what's a Lunarian?"

"Their only talked about in legends." Said Sheyna "My mother was big on that, I never was, but I guess once again she was right. They say that the Lunarians originated from the moon which orbited the planet that Baron used to be, before it merged. These people were said to possess a vast control on magic and be able to do things that normal people couldn't do. I don't know much about them beyond that. Only that the last of them was king of Baron, he was a good ruler and is said to have battled the force of evil itself. His sword is supposed to rest underneath the castle."

"But you said you were one." Said Harry

"My mother said that I was." She told him "She told me that Dad wasn't my real father that my father had died before I was born. He was a direct descendant or the last Lunarian. Apparently the blood doesn't get deluded."

"Well that would explain where all that power came from." Said Harry

"I suppose it does." Said Sheyna "I'd appreciate it if you didn't mention this to anyone."

"I won't" Said Harry "But you'll need to tell everyone something."

"I'll think of something." Said Sheyna

“I’m going to tell them about the sorceress power.” He told her “That guy will most likely come looking for it and that means that everyone around me could be in danger.”

“I’ll tell them when I’m ready.” Said Sheyna

“Suit yourself.” Said Harry giving up on the subject

“I’m really hungry.” She said suddenly

“Let’s get you some food then.” Said Harry

...

The next day the three girls were ushered into the castle by a pair of guards. Strife would be attacking the city in a matter of days and it was imperative that they let the people in charge know about what was coming.

“Sate your business.” Snapped one of the guards

“We are here to see the queen or whoever is in charge of your army.”
Said Andrea

“That would be General Exan.” Said the other guard “But she and the queen don’t have time to grant an audience with whoever comes calling.”

“We have a sensitive matter to discuss with them.” Said Andrea

“Then make an appointment.” Said the guard “I think there are some openings in about two weeks.”

“This is an urgent matter.” Said Sophia

“Too bad.” Said the guard.”

“Okay let’s just go.” Said Andrea

“What we just leave?” Asked Sheyna incredulously

"They obviously don't care what we have to say." Said Sophia

"I suppose you're right." Said Sheyna

When they were out of earshot from the guards they had another conversation.

"Time for plan B." Said Sophia "We'll sneak in and cast sleep on any guards we come across."

"Sounds like a plan." Said Sheyna "How do we get in?"

"We use the front door." Said Andrea "All we have to do is get rid of those two guards." Said Andrea "That shouldn't be too hard."

When they had rounded a corner Sophia started to yell "Fiend! It's attacking us!"

The two guards came running around the corner only to be put to sleep by Andrea and Sophia

"Good job." Said Sheyna "Now all we have to do is get into the audience chamber before someone finds them or someone wakes them up."

"We should have brought Harry." Said Sophia "He could just cast some kind of spell on them."

"He's too busy fiend killing." Said Andrea "Now that Sheyna's awake he doesn't have much else to do."

"They would have turned him away anyway." Said Sheyna as they walked through the palace.

"You're probably right." Said Sophia "They really need to do away with that rule, it's not fair or logical."

They continued in silence until they reached a door where two more guards were standing.

"State your business." Said the one on the right.

"We are here to see the queen." Said Andrea "We have an appointment.

"You must be the 11:00 O'clock" Said the one on the left

"That's us." Said Sheyna

"Funny, you don't look much like seamstresses." Said the same guard

"We're not your average dress makers." Said Andrea

"I see." said the guard "Most don't carry gunblades around."

"We had to come through Evil Forest" Said Sophia, and that was enough for the guards to let the subject drop.

"Well you'll need to wait for her majesty to finish with her current guest." Said the guard on the left.

"Why she puts up with having a man in there I'll never know." Grumbled the other guard

"A man?" Asked Sophia curiously

"Some guy with long silver hair." Said the guard

Suddenly the doors to the throne room burst open and a bunch of soldiers came pouring out and surrounded the three women. Behind the guards was a red haired woman in a suit of diamond armor. Then came an older woman with brown hair, graying in some areas. Lastly strode a man wearing an all black body suit and black cape. His long silver hair flowing behind him.

"You see your majesty, just like I told you, terrorists." Said the man
"You'll find that they knocked out some of your guards to get in here."

“Check it out.” Ordered the woman in the armor and a few soldiers rushed off to follow the orders

“I don’t know who you three are.” Said the queen “But you have some nerve barging into my castle and trying to...to do whatever it was you were trying to do.”

“Forgive us ma’am.” Said Andrea “We have urgent business to discuss and we only knocked the guards out.”

The soldiers came back with aghast looks on their faces “Murderers!” They yelled.

“We didn’t kill anyone!” Yelled Sheyna

“And I suppose the two corpses we found with Alexandrian armor just committed suicide!” Roared one of the soldiers

“If their dead we didn’t kill them.” Said Andrea calmly.

“Arrest them.” Said the woman in the diamond armor.

“Yes general!” Said the soldiers before they advanced on the trio.

“We don’t want to hurt you.” Said Andrea moving her hand toward her gunblade

“There will be none of that.” Said the man, he waved his hand and the trio’s weapons were ripped from their hands. Before they could do anything else they were brought to the ground and had their hands bound behind their back with heavy cuffs.

“Now take them to the dungeon.” Said the queen “We’ll show them how we deal with terrorists in Alexandria.”

“They have some men with them too.” Said the man

“How the hell does he know all that?” Wondered Sheyna mentally “Just who is this guy?” Then a memory of a conversation with Harry came back.

“Kuja has long silver hair, purple eyes and the way he talks generally pisses you off.” Was what Harry had said

This man had purple eyes, with a tint of red to them, he was smirking and had long silver hair.

“You’re Kuja.” Said Sheyna

The man didn’t answer his smirk simply grew.

“You’re making a deal with the devil your majesty.” Said Andrea “That man, whatever he promised you, isn’t worth what he’ll take from you in return.”

“Silence!” Yelled the general, kicking Andrea in the ribs. “You do not have permission to address her highness.”

Andrea bit back a spiteful retort and allowed herself to be dragged off to the prison cells at the top of the castle. The last thing the three heard before they were shut behind a heavy oak door was “Now we round up the males.”

...

“No way man.” Said Ethan in response to Bastian’s latest plan

“There’s no other way.” Said Bastian “If you can be a Strife soldier, why can’t you do this?”

“This is totally different.” Said Ethan “I am not wearing that, no.”

“It’s not like I asked you to wear pink.” said Bastian “All you’ve gotta do is put on the wig, dress and bra, stuff the bra full of cotton, oh and shave.”

“I am not dressing in drag to get into the castle.” Said Ethan “I know they’ve been gone a while, but they’ll be back.”

"It's been four hours." Said Bastian "Something is wrong and we need to find out what?"

"Why don't we just go find Harry and get him to do it?" Asked Ethan

"Because he could be anywhere outside the city and if we leave he could come back and not know where any of us are."

"So if we do this he could come back and not know where we are."
Shot back Ethan

"We'll leave a note." Said Bastian

"Why don't we just leave a note and go look for him?" Countered Ethan

"Because we need to find out why the girls haven't come back yet."
Said Bastian

"Fine." Said Ethan "But I'm not going to like it."

"Here." Said Bastian handing him a bag.

"This had better work too." Said Ethan taking the bag

"Just try to act feminine." Said Bastian

"Like this?" Asked Ethan trying to make his voice sound higher, but failing miserably

"No like this." Said Bastian doing his best female voice, and remarkably getting it pretty well."

"You know that is really disturbing." Said Ethan in his normal voice.

"Just put on the dress Ethan." Said Bastian still in his 'womanly' voice.

Ethan shuddered at this, but started to don the woman's apparel. It was a knee length black denim skirt and a white blouse. The wig was black as to match his skin tone. Bastian didn't need a wig since his

hair was already pretty long. He just combed it and made it look more presentable. After shaving and stuffing their bras the two men surveyed each other. Bastian had a similar outfit to Ethan, except the blouse was red and the skirt was a lighter shade of red.

“Okay now for the make-up.” Said Bastian

“I’ll wear a dress and a wig, I’ll even shave.” Said Ethan “But make-up is where I draw the line.”

“It will look more realistic if we use it.” Said Bastian

“Have you done this before or something?” Asked Ethan

“No.” Said Bastian a bit too quickly

“Oh Hyne you have!” Said Ethan

“Okay maybe once or twice, but now isn’t the time.” Said Bastian “I specialized in disguises at Garden so obviously I had to do this once or twice.”

“Whatever, just hand me the damn lipstick.” Said Ethan

Before they could finish converting themselves there was a banging at the door. It was knocked right in before they could even answer it. Ten soldiers all wielding swords came rushing into the room.

“Alright you male scum we....wait where are the men?” Asked the first soldier

“Men?” Asked Bastian adopting his feminine voice once again

“We were told by the man at the front desk that there were three men in these rooms.” Said another soldier

“Hmph men.” Sniffed Bastian arrogantly “They don’t know much of anything.”

“Right about that sister.” Said another soldier

“Well be on the lookout for a tall dark skinned man, a man with long blonde hair and bi-colored eyes, one brown and one blue, and a man with long unruly hair and green eyes.”

“Why are you looking for them.” Said Bastian now closing his blue eye.

“They are wanted for high crimes against the queen.” Said the first soldier “They are armed and very dangerous.”

“We’ll keep a lookout.” Said Ethan in his best girl voice, which was a lot better this time.

“We’ll leave you two ladies in peace then.” Said the soldier as the assembly left the room.

“Well things just got interesting.” Said Bastian “At least now we know why they aren’t back yet.”

“What now?” Asked Ethan

“We stay right here until Harry comes back.” Said Bastian

“What wearing this?” Asked Ethan alarmed

“We have to keep it on in case the soldiers come back.” Said Bastian

“But what if Harry sees us like...this.” Said Ethan

“Would you rather be arrested?” Asked Bastian

“No,” said Ethan “I still wish it could be avoided though.”

...

Harry ducked the tail swing from the huge monster he was fighting. It was similar to a Belhemoth, but was a lot bigger and had different horns, almost like a bull’s. It was a peach color and had a blue ridge of spikes going down its back. Seth called it a Zognol. The monster

followed the tail swipe with a thrust from its powerful forepaws. The clawed appendage would have ripped Harry asunder had he not blocked it with his gunblade. The monster swung its other claw at him and he was unable to block it since his gunblade was still pressed against the other claw. The blow tore a deep gash in his side and he hissed in pain. He used all his strength to push back against the monster, causing it to lose its balance and giving Harry an opening.

He jumped into the air, heading right for the creature's neck and chest. He sent a barrage of slashes at the monster, making sure to pull the trigger of his gunblade each time to maximize the impact. The only thing that saved the fiend from an untimely death was its thick hide, but that didn't stop Harry from causing some severe damage to it. The Zognol suddenly thrust its head forward, hitting Harry with a vicious head butt. The wizard was sent crashing to the ground, but quickly regained his footing, firing an explosion hex at the beast. The spell blew another chunk of skin from its chest. Harry decided it was time he ended this fight. He used his magic to increase his speed and the world seemed to slow down. He ran at the Zognol with his blade stretched out and cut through the monster's hide easily. He repeated this a few times before letting time catch up with him. It took a moment for the Zognol to realize what had happened. Then its shoulders, hind legs and forelegs slid apart where Harry had sliced through them. The monster didn't even make a sound as it died.

"You're getting better." commented Seth "If you keep this up you just might stand a chance against Kujamort, or whatever you call him."

"Kujamort just sounds stupid," said Harry. "So does Voldemort really, so I'll just call him Kuja."

"Have it your way." said Seth. "I need to tell you something important anyway."

"And that is...?" asked Harry

"You remember that Ultima spell you drew a while back." said Seth

"What about it?" asked the wizard

"It's going to divide soon." informed the guardian "This time it won't do anything damaging, just make you a lot stronger, but I think you should be able to cast it now without killing yourself."

"Okay," said Harry "what about Holy?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you?" said Seth "That divided a couple of times, but since you only had about ten of them, you're only at about forty right now. It would still be good if you could junction that to something, but the way you have it right now it would be counter productive to try to fit it in, oh and you can cast it now too."

"And my other spells?" asked Harry

"They divide about every week or so," said Seth "But since you use them so much they don't really accumulate, they just maintain a regular number."

"Well, Seth, I know you're busy with Mako fiends, but could you try to let me know about what's going on with my magic a little more often?" said Harry

"I'll do my best." said Seth. Although he didn't sound like he would put forth his best effort in this.

Harry resolved to check his spells more often. It wouldn't do for him to reach his magical capacity and be unaware of it. It was good to know that he could now cast two very powerful spells though. They would undoubtedly come in very handy. Now all he needed to do was figure out how to cast the two spells housed in the black materia and figure out what to do with the sorceress power hanging from his neck. He considered trying to absorb it, but it wasn't meant for a man to hold, and apparently the power was enough to drive its wielder insane without the grounding of a knight.

As Harry walked toward the city he started to feel uneasy, as if someone was watching him. His suspicions were confirmed when a group of soldiers suddenly surrounded him. They all carried swords or spears and they all had their weapons ready. It was hard to tell how many there were, but Harry guessed that there were at least

twenty. Out of the back of the group the general strode forward, her red hair glinting in the afternoon sunlight.

“Where is the rest of your group?” she asked coldly

“Who wants to know?” countered Harry

“General Lucile Exan of the Alexandrian Army.” informed the general
“Now answer the question.”

“Listen,” said Harry “I’ve had about enough of you people’s superiority complex when it comes to men. I’m telling you anything until you tell me what the hell is going on here.”

“Know your place man!” roared one of the soldiers stepping forward. Instantly Harry had his gunblade in his hands and was in a defensive stance.

“Are you resisting arrest?” asked the general in an amused tone
“There are thirty of us and one of you, how do you expect to win?”

“Try me,” said Harry “But before you do, tell me what I’m under arrest for!”

“Like you don’t know.” said another soldier

“Aiding in a homicide and endangering Alexandria with terrorist actions.” said General Lucile

“Terrorist actions?” asked Harry confused

“We know all about your little plan to ‘warn us’ about an attack from Strife.” said the general mockingly “We were told about how you operate, tell us that we’re in danger so you can get close to the queen and kill her, thereby throwing the city into chaos.”

“Who told you that?” asked Harry generally curious despite the current situation

“Enough of this,” said Lucile. “Surrender now or face the consequences.”

“Guess I’ll face the consequences.” said Harry

“Bring him down!” yelled Lucile

The soldiers surged forward, and Harry was ready for them. He parried the many sword slashes from the soldiers and jumped to avoid the spear jabs from others. He landed atop a few spears that had crossed paths and delivered a series of kicks to their wielders before the women could counter. He quickly cast a Haste spell on himself and started firing Blizzaga spells to break a hole through the ranks. He could have cast more powerful spells, but he didn’t want to kill any of the soldiers as he was already suspected of terrorism.

Once out of the middle of the soldiers he started to run toward the woods. He needed to get back into the city to check on the others, he suspected that the girls were all prisoners, but that still left Ethan and Bastian unaccounted for. Finding them came later though, now he had to survive against a battalion of soldiers intent on bringing him down. Two of the women caught up with him, both wielding swords. He dodged their initial strikes and cast stop on them, still not wanting to kill them. By this time three more had caught up to him, two with spears and another with a sword. Harry took the initiative and rushed them. He went for the closest spear carrying soldier first. He deftly deflected her thrust and brought the flat of his blade against her temple, knocking her unconscious. He cast a sleep spell on the sword wielding woman and delivered a magically charged kick to the last soldier’s stomach, bringing her down.

He felt a vast wave of magic coming his direction and moved just in time to avoid an explosion of energy where he’d been standing only seconds before. General Lucile stood flanked by the remainder of the soldiers, her sword out stretched and pulsing with magical energy.

“You do have some skill,” she informed him “But can you defeat me?”

“I don’t want to fight you all,” said Harry “But you’re not leaving me much of a choice.”

Lucile ignored him and waved her sword through the air. A bolt of electricity came streaming from where the blade had slashed through the air and headed straight for Harry. The wizard hastily cast a shield around himself and blocked the blow. Before he could even react Lucile was right in front of him, lashing out with her blade. It took all of Harry's speed just to keep up with the furious attacks. Suddenly the general leapt backwards and rushed forward once again with electricity crackling around her blade.

"Thunder Slash!" she cried as she struck at Harry with her sword. Harry blocked the blade with his own, but the electricity that coursed through his body as a result was almost overwhelming. It seemed that Lucile was just getting started though. She was assaulting Harry with a continuous barrage of Thunder Slashes that he was forced to try and dodge. Tired of being on the defensive, the wizard waited for Lucile to gather energy for another attack. When she did so, he sped up and started assaulting her with everything he had, pouring magic into his attacks to make them stronger. He was shocked when she started to speed up to match him. He didn't let it phase him though. He simply kept up his attacks and managed to score a few glancing blows to her forearms and torso.

He was caught off guard when she sent a kick to his midsection, doubling him over. Next he was hit in the face with a punch that sent him flying back several feet. He quickly regained his footing and ran straight at her with his sword outstretched. She smirked at his seeming lack of guard and prepared to counter his barrage. He almost laughed at the shock on her face when he disappeared and came up behind her, delivering a chop to the back of her neck and bringing her down. He turned to the soldiers who were staring at him agape.

"Anyone else want some?" he taunted them.

In response they all rushed forward intent on avenging their general's defeat. Harry was sure that he could handle them, but at the moment he had more important things to do, and he couldn't guarantee that he wouldn't accidentally kill one of them if he stayed to fight. He raised his hand and conjured a ball of super bright light. Then he

threw the ball and it exploded, blinding the soldiers and giving Harry an opportunity to escape. He shifted invisible and headed toward the city. It would take the soldiers a while to recover and even longer to realize that he'd left the area, this gave him ample time to search for the others and figure out a way to break the girls out of the castle. Then they could deal with the problem of Strife.

...

Voldemort was livid, he'd been searching for three days and he still couldn't find any information on what the 'key' was, or what the writing in the chamber meant by "return the world to the way it was meant to be" He had his suspicions, but he still wasn't sure. In addition to this, he'd recently discovered that his Death Eaters were severely lacking in proper dueling skills. They seemed to only want to cast unforgivable curses and nothing more, while these curses were powerful, they lacked the strategic prowess of charms and jinxes. In order to defeat a skilled opponent it was necessary to use every spell at your disposal. His minions seemed to be unable to grasp this fact.

Then there was the problem with his own magic. While it was extremely powerful, he was having problems controlling it. Ever since he'd used that vast amount of power to obliterate Merlin's seal, it seemed that he had trouble using less power than that. If he wanted to levitate something, he had to make it fly a hundred feet in the air first, before slowly letting it back down. Once he'd been angry at a Death Eater and cast the Cruciatus Curse on him. Unfortunately for the Death Eater, his curse had been so strong that it had caused the man to explode. He needed to rectify this problem and he needed to do it soon.

His thoughts were interrupted by the entrance of his Inner Circle. They had many things to discuss, and his thoughts could wait.

"What have you to report?" he asked his followers.

"The Dementors are growing restless." said McNair "Your year reprieve is starving them so much that they are starting to bother the rest of us, one even tried to give the Kiss to a younger recruit."

"I see." said Voldemort "In that case release them to do as they please. I said that 'I' wouldn't attack, not the dark creatures."

"At once master." said McNair bowing deeply.

"The performance of the younger Death Eaters is abysmal at best." drawled Snape "They couldn't duel if their lives depended on it."

"Restrict them to only using fifth year and below jinxes." said Voldemort "When they learn to kill with those spells they can start implementing more dangerous spells, until then they aren't to even think about casting an Unforgivable. Anyone who does will have that curse used on them, so strongly suggest that they refrain from using the killing curse.

"As you command my lord." said Snape before seeping out of the room.

"We have made pacts with more giant tribes as well as alliances with Lord Goki of Japan." said Bellatrix Lestrange. "The goblins are still refusing to pick sides. We have managed to procure more vampire allies and we even managed to persuade some orcs to aid us."

"Good, a wonderful job as always Bella," said Voldemort "As for the goblins, let them be for now. I've got something special planned for them. As for the rest of you, I have something very important for you all to do. I want you to go out and start killing every muggle you see, do not kill ANYONE with magical blood, be they mudblood, half blood or pureblood. I don't care about the Muggle though, women, children, the old, the sick, kill them all. You will do it without your masks though. Don't fire the dark mark either. I want it to seem as though wizards are uprising. Don't worry about the statute of secrecy either. Spread the word to our allies across the globe. I want Muggles to fear magic and give it the respect it deserves."

"Yes master." chorused the Death Eaters before they departed.

Now all that remained were Voldemort and Henry Potter.

"Very ambitious of you Tom." Said the older wizard

“Fitting of a Slytherin.” Said Voldemort

“Indeed,” Said Potter “But I can’t help but wonder what you’re planning to do when the Muggles declare war on all wizards.”

“You’ll see when the time comes.” Said Voldemort “Have you had any luck finding out what ‘the key’ is? Or about the place where demons loose their way?”

“All I found was this.” said Henry “It’s written in a strange language, I found it in a hidden library behind a wall in one of the cells with a lot like it.”

“It’s handwritten,” said Voldemort. “It’s extremely old too. This looks like some older form of Egyptian mixed with ancient Aztec.”

“You think a translation spell would work on it?” Asked Henry

“It might.” said Voldemort. “I won’t know until I try.”

He performed the translation charm on the book and the words slowly turned into Greek, a language which he understood. Once it was done he began to read, and this one book would change his view on magic forever.

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A/N: Another long chapter for all of you wonderful people. Okay listen up because this is important, and I am not saying it again. In regards to the ship in this story, I don’t know yet. I had thought about doing one thing, but then changed my mind and then changed it again and then....well you get the picture. I can tell you what it won’t be, not slash, not H/Hr. That is about all I am certain of. I still have a general idea, but whatever it is, there won’t be too much ‘fluff’ in the story anyway. I am NOT a romance writer, so whatever I make the ship, if I have one for Harry, it won’t be the central focus of the story. To those of you who dislike one character or another, I’m sorry if I focus on that character. If I do it’s because I like that character and will do things with them. If you don’t like it, too bad. Now please be kind and leave

a review. I really appreciate those. Maybe this time I can get 20+ for a chapter, but I won't hold my breath.

Battle of Alexandria

Harry ran toward the city as fast as he could, still invisible to avoid the guards. He figured that he should check the hotel first, since that was the last place he'd seen anyone from his group. The innkeeper raised an eyebrow at the opening door, but paid it no mind. Harry quickly made his way to his room and looked inside. It was empty of course, so he checked Andrea and Ethan's room. What he saw almost made him gasp. There were two people, obviously Ethan and Bastian, dressed in women's clothing, complete with wigs, make-up and it appeared that they'd even shaved their legs.

"What in the name of Merlin...?" started Harry

"Not one word." said Bastian

"This is one of those times where you don't say anything," said Ethan. "It'll be best if we all forget that this happened and never speak of it again, agreed?"

Harry could only nod in affirmative and quickly averted his gaze from the two men-in-drag.

"Good man." said Ethan.

"Glad they didn't catch you," said Bastian. "We were just waiting for you to get back so we could change."

"They almost got me," said Harry. "But I managed to give them the slip."

"You see what we resorted to." said Ethan.

"How'd you know they were coming?" wondered Harry.

"We didn't," said Bastian. "We were gong to sneak into the castle using these disguises, when they burst through the door."

"We need a plan," said Harry. "If we just burst through the front door, we'll be slaughtered."

"You can get in," said Ethan. "Bastian and I will get out of the city and head for the cave that connects to Evil Forest."

"How long do we have until Strife attacks?" asked Harry

"Last time we reported in," said Ethan "We were told that they'd be starting in forty-eight hours."

"How long ago was that?" asked Harry

"Yesterday," said Bastian

"So with your thirty-six hour days, that means we've got less than twelve hours!" exclaimed Harry

"More or less." said Ethan

"We'll need to work quick then." said Harry "They don't believe an attack is coming, so I guess we'll just have to help in any way we can. If I don't get the girls out before it starts, it'll be up to you two to try and hinder them. The soldiers should help, but they'll be caught off guard."

"What about the docks?" asked Bastian

"Once I get the girls, we should be able to handle the force that's coming through there," said Harry. "I'm forming a plan to have the castle guards there to back us up."

"We'll leave it to you then," said Bastian, now changed back into his normal clothing, a black t-shirt, green fingerless gloves and beige pants. Ethan too, was wearing his normal clothing, which was basically his SeeD uniform without the emblems.

They heard a noise in the hallway and knew that the soldiers were searching the place again. Bastian and Ethan jumped out of the window, while Harry shifted invisible and waited for the guards to open the door. Once they did he made his way past them and headed for the castle.

Soldiers were running around the streets, and Harry figured that this was a good thing, even though they weren't prepared for a full scale battle, at least they were alert. This would keep some of them alive a lot longer than otherwise.

His first obstacle came in the form of the castle gate. The drawbridge was raised, so that meant that he had to find a way onto the other side, and then find a way into the castle. The first part wasn't hard. He only had to get a running start and boost his leg strength so that he could jump the distance of the moat. He spied an open window a few meters up the wall, so he started to climb towards it. Inside was what appeared to be a library. It housed a great many tomes, and Harry would have liked to see if there was anything interesting, but he had more pressing matters to attend to.

Outside the library, the hallway split into three different directions. Harry decided to take the path leading straight ahead. He looked around until he found some stairs leading downward since that was the most logical place for a dungeon, or at least it was to Harry. He finally found what he was looking for and headed downward. He passed several rooms, but nothing resembling a dungeon door. After going around many twists and turns, and finding no more stairs leading downward, he found himself lost.

"Which way now?" he thought as he came to another intersection.

"I'm just as lost as you are." said Seth

"A lot of help you are." replied Harry

"I'll remember that next time you need me to save you in a battle." said Seth

"I'm sorry, oh great and might Seth." said Harry sarcastically "If you don't have anything worthwhile to add, then keep quiet."

Harry laughed mentally at Seth's hiss of indignation as he decided on the left hallway. He came to a stairway heading upward and decided to take it. It appeared as though he'd found the main stairway, since

there were several flights leading up and doors every two flights. He also saw some stairs heading downward and changed his course to take those. The dungeon had to be down there somewhere.

Once at the bottom of the stairs, he found himself in a long hallway. There were no doors along it, just bare, grey, stone wall. At the other end there was a door, so he headed for it. The door led into a room with a large fountain. The fountain housed a statue of a man holding a double-bladed sword. The statue's face seemed to hold an heir of the utmost confidence, as if this warrior thought he could defeat anyone with the utmost ease. The statue wasn't the only thing in the room though.

"About time you got here Potter." said a velvety male voice from a darkened corner of the room. Kuja stepped out of the corner and looked right at Harry, despite the fact that he was invisible. "You may as well reveal yourself, I can see you."

"I'm fine, thanks." replied Harry "I figured you had something to do with this."

"You should stay away from matters that don't concern you," said Kuja "This is a personal matter I'm attending to."

"I'm not letting you kill all these innocent people." said Harry adamantly

"And what can you do to stop me?" asked Kuja. "Your full power barely equals a fifth of mine. You don't stand a chance against me."

As if to prove his point he gathered a ball of dark energy in his left hand and threw it at the wizard. Harry tried to dodge, but the action was so fast, he barely saw it in time. The ball struck him in the chest and sent him to the ground. He struggled to get to his feet, but Kuja was before him in an instant and delivered a vicious kick to his chest. Harry collapsed back onto the ground and Kuja placed his foot on the younger man's chest. He pointed his palm at Harry's head and gathered a ball of dark fire.

“You see?” he asked mockingly. “You couldn’t even last a minute. If I wanted to I could destroy you right now.”

“Then why don’t you?” asked Harry defiantly. “Don’t have the guts to go through with it?”

Kuja simply laughed at him “Oh I have the ‘guts’ as you put it,” informed Kuja “I simply still have a use for you, but if you keep getting in my way, both you and your band of misfits will be destroyed.”

Kuja looked down at Harry and his eyes found the necklace around his neck, on it was the Sorceress’ crystal as well as the altered Ultima Materia.

“What have we here?” said Kuja reaching for the necklace.

When he let his hand drop to grab the necklace, Harry reacted. He’d been channeling power into both hands, and Kuja, being so arrogant, hadn’t noticed the electricity forming into balls in both of his hands. With a cry of rage, Harry slammed both hands into Kuja’s chest, catching him off guard and causing a massive surge of electricity to course through the older man’s body. Kuja yelled in rage and pain as the energy coursed its way through his body. Harry pushed himself off the floor, causing Kuja to topple over. Next Harry blasted him with the strongest Blizzaga spell he could muster. A huge block of ice formed around Kuja, effectively stopping him in his tracks.

Harry knew that this wouldn’t hold him for long, he needed to get out of here, find the girls and hopefully secure the dock and make it out of the castle. All this needed to be done before Strife attacked or Kuja broke free from his icy prison. Harry sprinted back down the hall and up the many flights of stairs. If the dungeon wasn’t at the bottom of the castle, the next best place for it was in a high tower.

After Harry had made it a few floors higher, he felt a vibration rock the whole castle. He knew that this meant only one thing, the attack had started. Soldiers rushed around, trying to figure out what had happened. He was hard pressed to dodge the growing number of them and he silently hoped he’d be able to make it to where the girls were being held. He also noticed, as he ran, that the air was starting

to get colder. It reminded him of the feeling the Dementors brought on, but he knew that they couldn't possibly be here, or could they?

His question was answered when he started hearing the tell-tale voices of his parents inside his mind.

"Take Harry and go!"

"Avada Kadavra!"

"Not Harry, please."

"Ignore it!" yelled Seth through the growing haze in his mind. "I don't know how they are here either, but I can tell they aren't close enough to you to hurt you, yet."

"Avada Kadavra!"

"Crucio!"

"I'm trying to," said Harry through gritted teeth. "But it keeps getting louder, they must have stronger powers here."

This in and of itself wasn't surprising. His magic had grown a great deal, just by coming into this world. Therefore the Dementors would surely get their powers amplified as well. The question was, how were they here in the first place?

The soldiers were being affected by them as well. They were no longer running at full speed, many had stopped altogether, just standing there and shaking. A few others had totally lost it, so caught up in their worst memories that they couldn't even see reality.

Harry could take a guess as to who was behind the Dementors, Kuja. That man was really going overboard. As if the overwhelming number of soldiers from Strife, as well as their considerable air and naval forces weren't enough. Now he'd summoned the most vile creatures in existence. Harry resolved that it was time for a change of plans. He couldn't possibly protect the whole castle, and get himself and the others out alive. The soldiers needed to pull themselves together

before the Dementors got close enough to start giving people The Kiss.

He tried to think up a happy memory, but he couldn't. Most of them were tied to home, and that brought on feelings of sorrow, which were not good for casting a Patronus Charm. It was getting harder to focus as well. He was starting to see flashes of memories, instead of just hearing the voices. Seth was yelling at him to try and snap him out of it, but it wasn't helping too much. What did help was when the castle shook once more from the attack going on outside. This also seemed to rile some of the soldiers around him. They started making their way to the ramparts and front gate. Harry heard an animalistic roar and knew that it was from some of the many fiends in the area.

As he was passing a window, a group of Strife soldiers in jetpacks zoomed into it. They couldn't see Harry since he was still invisible, so he quickly used this to his advantage. His gunblade tore through the thin armor of the first soldier's neck, then he quickly followed with a barrage of Fira spells to the other three. Two of them managed to dodge the spells, but the last wasn't so lucky. Two fireballs impacted his helmet in quick succession. The plastic visor was blasted inward as it melted, totally destroying the man's face behind it.

Harry quickly dodged the gunshots fired at his position. They still couldn't see him, but by seeing where the spells came from, they knew his general position. Harry was about to cast a Thundaga on the remaining soldiers, when a huge fiend suddenly burst through the window and part of the wall. It landed on the soldiers, squishing them flat. The thing looked like some sort of huge lizard man with wings. It stood on its hind legs and sported a long tail and a head that looked like that of a crocodile. Its hands were tipped with serrated claws, and it had three rows of spikes going down its back.

Harry wasted no time in letting loose the Thundaga spell intended for the soldiers. The thing didn't even try to dodge the magic. Instead it appeared to absorb it. It took a deep breath and blew out a stream of electricity from its mouth. Harry saved himself with a hastily conjured shield. The beast wasn't done yet though, immediately following the breath attack, it swiped its huge claws at the young wizard. Harry's gunblade met the attack, but the lizard lashed out with its tail,

catching the wizard off guard and making him lose his footing. He turned his stumble into a backwards roll in order to avoid the lizard's foot, which had been aimed at his head. The thing must see magic, since it seemed to know exactly where Harry was, despite his invisibility.

In addition to the lizard, Harry had another problem. The air was growing colder by the minute. That meant that the Dementors must be getting closer. Harry wondered how many of them there were if the effects were this strong. He was desperately trying to quell the images and sounds of his worst memories. Currently he was reliving the night Voldemort was resurrected. All the while trying to fend off an eight foot tall reptile.

The thing lunged for his face with its jaws, but Harry countered the onslaught with a well aimed slash from his gunblade. The lizard halted just in time to avoid decapitation. It sent its tail at Harry once again, but this time he was ready and jumped over the offending appendage. Then he brought his blade down on the tail, cutting it off near the base. The lizard roared in rage and agony. It sent a blow at Harry using its fists. He was sent flying through the air by the powerful blow and went straight through a wall on the far end of the corridor.

"Kill the spare"

"Blood of the enemy, forcibly taken."

Harry was seeing the events from the graveyard in Little Hangleton. He didn't see the lizard raising its clawed fist for a finishing blow, he didn't see himself automatically react, but he felt magic surge out of his hand and his eyes opened just in time to see a very dark, green light shoot from his palm. The light struck the lizard in the stomach. It stepped back a few feet and then was blown apart by the powerful spell. The shock of the event snapped Harry out of his traumatic memories.

He took in his surroundings and realized that he'd been knocked into some kind of storage room. There were weapons thrown into a corner, as well as some bangles with materia, and even some junction

stones. This had to be the equipment the girls had been carrying. Now that he had these, all he had to do was find them. He shrunk the weapons, all except Andrea's gunblade, equipped the materia he had room for, and pocketed the rest. When he looked at the junction stones, he realized he had yet another problem. He couldn't fit anything else in his pockets without shrinking it first, but he couldn't shrink the stones because of their natures. So he only had one choice.

"What would happen if I junction three GF at once?" he asked Seth.

"You should be able to handle it." said the guardian "Shiva and Quetzacoatl aren't conflicting elements, now if you had Ifrit, or The Brothers..."

"I get it." said Harry picking up the stones.

Shiva's was a pale blue color with a picture of a snowflake on it. Quetzacoatl's was a greenish-yellow with a lightning bolt at its center. Harry touched both stones to the palms of his hand and willed them to join with his magic. He felt two powerful presences enter his mind and take up residence there.

"You are not my last junctioner," said an icy female voice. "Hmm...maybe you will do, for now."

"Interesting." mused Quetzacoatl. "He is the same as Bahaumut."

"What do you mean?" asked Seth.

"Nothing," said the lightning guardian "For the time being you may barrow my strength wizard."

"That went well." thought Harry as he made his way out of the now destroyed room.

He still didn't know what that spell had been, but whatever it was, he was glad he'd cast it. He realized suddenly, that the Dementors weren't effecting him as much now. It was as if there was a block around his memories that kept him from recalling them. He did still

feel the cold, but the sounds and images were now no more than a slight murmuring sound at the back of his head.

“That is our doing,” said Quetzacoatl. “We take residence where your memories reside, young Seth didn’t need to take much room, so you didn’t notice the effect, but with so three of us in here, we needed to go somewhere.”

“I’m not complaining,” said Harry “As long as I don’t forget something important.”

“That shouldn’t be a problem,” said Shiva “As long as we don’t stay here too long, no long term damage should be done.”

“That’s good.” said Harry “Either of you know where they locked up the girls?”

“No human we do not.” said Shiva

“Damn.” muttered Harry

Harry cast a Cura on himself to repair the damage done by the lizard. He still had a few more floors to check and couldn’t afford to be injured if he needed to fight. He rounded a bend, heading for another flight of stairs when he saw them. Three tall figures in black cloaks. They seemed to glide down the corridor and the light near them seemed to vanish altogether, but somehow you could still make them out, even in the gloom. Harry desperately sought out a happy thought, but none came. The three Dementors were drawing closer and closer, moving with surprising swiftness. If he couldn’t use a Patronus, there was little to nothing he could do to fend off the creatures, unless another spell could get the job done.

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Two hours earlier

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Andrea sat alone in her prison cell at the top of the north tower. She'd been in there for about eight hours now, and already it was starting to wear on her. Since she was alone she could allow her worries to pass through her mind and not worry about any outward signs of showing it. This was good because she was extremely worried. She had no idea what Kuja's part in all this was, nor did she know how the attack would play out or even when it would begin. The most prevalent thought though was how was she going to get out of the prison?

Staying put wasn't an option, she needed to break out, find the others, retrieve their junctions and go from there. She studied the door once more, and again she couldn't find any weakness to exploit within its structure. The walls too offered no solutions. She'd just have to wait for an opportunity, and take it when it came.

Such a time came ten minutes later. A guard opened her cell door to throw in some cold food. The moment the guard made the mistake of turning her back, Andrea pounced. She leapt up from her position on the floor and slammed her elbow into the back of the woman's neck. The guard went down quietly, and Andrea relieved her of her sword and keys. The woman also had a Restore Materia, so Andrea took that too.

She saw several other doors, and knew that at least one other guard was in the area. She would have to work fast and quietly, she just hoped that the others had enough sense to do the same when she found them. She checked the cell immediately across from her, and found only an aged drunk man. Ignoring the drunkard she went to the cells on either side of hers, seeing a skeleton in one and an empty second one. Finally on the next cell over she found Sheyna. The other woman was sitting in the corner of her cell, looking spaced out.

"Sheyna!" hissed Andrea through the slit at the top of the door.

Sheyna didn't seem to hear her, so she tried again, but still received no answer. Growing frustrated she simply opened the cell door. This was a big mistake. The moment she got through the door, the other girl was standing and sending a punch straight for her face. Only SeeD reflexes saved her from being clobbered. She grabbed Sheyna's fist and automatically countered with an arm drag. Sheyna

was no slouch though and reversed the arm drag, using its momentum to catch Andrea in a rolling slam. The Seed hastily thrust her hands out in order to keep her head from striking the hard stone floor. Then she used her feet to hit Sheyna with a double kick to the midsection.

“What the hell!” said Andrea heatedly

Sheyna seemed to shake herself and finally realize what was happening.

“Sorry Andrea.” she said slowly “I thought you were a guard, something was just telling me that I needed to get out of this cell.”

“It’s alright.” said Andrea. But on the inside she was wondering why Sheyna had that spaced out look on her face. “We need to find Sophia.”

“Yeah.” said Sheyna

It seemed that their fight had attracted some attention. As soon as they stepped into the hallway, four guards came rushing around the corner.

“Escapees!” they cried. “Get them!”

Three of the guards ran forward, swords drawn. Andrea prepared herself for a fight, but before the guards even got close a blue ball of fire materialized between them. It moved with them for a moment and they didn’t seem to notice it. Then, all of a sudden, the ball exploded violently. The soldiers screamed in agony as they were burned by the powerful spell. Andrea looked around to see Sheyna with her hand outstretched, it seemed that she was gaining some control over her strange powers.

“How did you do that?” asked Andrea.

“That’s not important.” said Sheyna.

Andrea noticed that she sounded kind of distracted, but she contributed it to the use of her powers. Andrea didn't know what they were, but she had a suspicion that they could be Sorceress Powers. The matter could be left for the time being, but she would have to look into it further soon.

They rounded a corner just in time to see Sophia finishing up with a trio of guards. Andrea wasn't surprised, the other woman had been a SeeD, so she knew how to handle these kinds of situation, she was however, surprised at Sophia's aptness with a blade, but then she herself knew at least the basics of most weapons.

"Oh good you're out." said Sophia cheerfully. "I was waiting for them to open the cell so I could get out. Turned out there were four of them waiting for me, they should have had more soldiers."

"Where's the other one?" asked Andrea.

"She's knocked out in the cell." said Sophia. "So what do we do now?"

As if to answer her question, the whole castle seemed to shake. Soon roars of fiends could be heard from outside and gunfire as well.

"It's happening!" said Andrea urgently. "We need to get down to the docks and intercept the force coming from that direction."

"Wouldn't it be better just to get out of here?" asked Sheyna

"As much as we may not like them," said Andrea "We can't just let Strife massacre the Alexandrians.

"If you say so." said Sheyna going over and picking up one of the swords dropped by the guards. She also searched each one of them thoroughly for materia. Andrea saw her take out several green orbs and a few blue and yellow orbs.

"What did they have?" she Asked

“Lightning, Sense, Fire and some Restore,” said Sheyna. “Oh, and there’s a few All and Elemental Materia here too.”

“Let me have one of those Lightning and Elementals.” said Andrea.

Sheyna handed her the requested orbs and she and Sophia divided up the rest. Having had her arm bracers taken, she was forced to insert the materia into her weapon. It only had room for three orbs, so she only just managed to fit all her newly acquired materia into it. Once they were all prepared to fight she led them toward the stairway leading downward. She knew that the castle was situated at the very top of the plateau, therefore the docks would have to be at the very bottom of the castle, at its deepest subterranean floor.

Since they didn’t have the luxury of invisibility, they had to make their way through the castle very carefully. Currently it was pandemonium in the corridors. Soldiers were running this way and that, screams and fiend cries could be heard from the outside and klaxons were blaring all around. Every now and then they would run into a soldier or five and have to deal with them accordingly. Andrea had to stop Sheyna from outright killing them when they came, it seemed that her powers only had two strength levels, lethal and very lethal.

“Why can’t I just kill them?” asked the woman frustrated

“Since when are you so intent on killing people?” asked Sophia
“They’re only doing their job. You can’t just kill them.”

“They’re trying to kill us.” argued Sheyna

“True,” said Sophia. “But they’re only trying to protect the castle, you can’t fault them for that.”

“Just try not to kill them.” said Andrea

“I’ll try.” said Sheyna

“What’s wrong with her?” wondered Andrea mentally.

They continued downward for another forty minutes or so. They ran into more soldiers, but they weren't too much trouble. The trouble started when the fiends started to break through the walls. Bombs would float through the corridors, exploding or hurling fireballs as they went. Drakes and Chimera's were scaling the walls and breaking in through the windows and there were several other fiends that were of varying flying varieties.

When they reached what Andrea recognized as the ground floor, the air around them started to get cold and for some reason, Andrea started to feel extremely solemn, it appeared the others were feeling it too.

"What's going on?" asked Sophia. "Why do I feel like...like...NO!"

Andrea didn't have time to ponder what Sophia had suddenly screamed about, because she found herself no longer in the castle. She was a place she hoped she'd never see again, her parents' house.

"Such a disgrace!" yelled her father

"I curse the day you were ever conceived." said her mother venomously

"I didn't...it wasn't." Andrea found herself saying, just as she remembered.

"Shut up!" roared her father, backhanding her. "It's your fault, yours and nobody else's."

"You're sister's not coming back and you just let it happen!" shrieked her mother.

"There was nothing I could do!" sobbed Andrea

Her father grunted in frustration and barely restrained rage. "I said shut up!" This time he slapped her so hard that he drew blood and sent her sprawling on the floor. "You are no longer welcome here, if I

ever see you again, I will not be held responsible for my actions. As far as Naomi and I are concerned, we have no daughter.”

“NO!” cried Andrea, and it seemed as though this brought her back to reality. It was just in time too, because more fiends had found their way to the trio’s location. The prospect of a battle pushed all other thoughts from her mind. It was one advantage to being a trained warrior, battle was the first priority. There were three bombs and about four Drakes. The Drakes were all ice-elementals, so this wouldn’t be too hard. She started attacking one of the bombs, with no regard for its highly volatile nature. As soon as it started to grow, she smacked it with the flat of her sword, sending it flying into the group of Drakes. The explosion took out three of the Bombs and all of the Drakes, all that remained was a solitary fireball, however this fireball wasn’t ordinary. It appeared to glow with a golden flame, instead of the customary orange. She could tell just by looking at it, that this fiend would fry her if she got too close to it, that left sword strikes out of the question. A Blizzaga spell might do some damage, but as she had no Ice Materia and her junctioned magic was useless without a GF, she’d need to find another tactic. She tried using a Thundara spell, but that didn’t seem to do anything more than make the Bomb angry. So angry in fact that it started to grow.

It seemed that Sophia and Sheyna were now out of their respective trances. The solemn feeling still hung in the air, but they were both ready to fight. Sophia blasted the bomb with Blizzaga spell after Blizzaga spell. It was damaging it, but the fiend was still growing. Sheyna too was using Blizzaga spells, but still the fiend persevered.

“Run!” said Andrea seeing what was about to happen.

They didn’t waste any time reacting and ran full speed in the opposite direction. The corridor resounded with a loud BOOM sound and again the castle’s foundation shook. When she looked back behind her, Andrea saw that the corridor had been completely destroyed. This was unfortunate, because she knew that that was the way leading to the basement. There were other stairways leading there, but that was the only one which she was familiar with. Sighing she lead the group to search for another way.

Luck was on their side for a little while. They didn't run into too many fiends, and the soldier encounters were few and far between, on some occasions they managed to get by some soldiers, who were fighting fiends, without being noticed. Their luck ran out when they encountered a group of three Strife Special Forces soldiers. They were easily identified by their all black uniforms and the lettering SSF across their body vests in white letters. They also wore helmets which obscured their faces. These soldiers, unlike regular grunts, were trained to almost the same capacity as a SeeD, the only difference being that they relied heavily on materia, while SeeDs stuck to junctions.

"Well, well, well," said one of the soldiers "Looks like we've got some Alexandrians out of uniform boys."

"No discipline," said another soldier "Typical women."

"Hey, there's one for each of us." said the last soldier "I call the pretty blonde one."

"Go to hell." snapped Andrea

"Oohh, feisty," said the soldier "I like that." He pulled out a pair of scimitars and waved them threateningly.

The other two pulled out a pair of short axes and a double handed bow respectively.

"I wish I had a gun." muttered Sheyna while getting into her attack stance.

"They don't know who they're dealing with." said Sophia

"Stay on guard, these aren't your normal peons." said Andrea

The soldier with the scimitars rushed at her. He brought both blades at her from either side. She jumped backwards and struck at him with her sword when he was recovering from his lunge. She didn't let up on her attacks, thinking it better to keep him on the defensive. He parried most of her blows, but he did receive some minor cuts in the

process. Finally growing tired of the standoff, Andrea purposely faltered in her stride, giving him an opening. When he took the bait, she sent a kick right into his groin. He collapsed to the floor gasping for air, but still clutching his scimitars.

"You dirty bitch!" he yelled in a strangled voice.

Andrea responded by bringing her blade down for a finishing blow. The man barely blocked the strike, using both scimitars to hold the sword inches from his face.

"This ends now." said Andrea. She focused on her Elemental and Lightning Materia, willing them to channel their energies into her sword. A bolt of blue lightning arched along her blade and soon became a massive wave of electricity that coursed through her blade and into her opponents. The man screamed in pain as an insane amount of volts racked through his body, utterly destroying his nervous system.

Being done with her opponent, she decided to watch the others. She saw Sheyna duck a strike from the short axe wielder and blast him with a froth of blue flame. The man exploded violently, but his remains quickly turned to ash. All that remained was his weapons belt, which held two pistols. Sheyna bent down and fastened the belt around her waist.

Sophia wasn't having too much trouble with the bow wielder either. She appeared to simply be gauging him and seemed to be disappointed at the lack of challenge. She wasn't much of a fighter, but it was an insult to her SeeD training at the man's lack of skill, especially from a group which was supposed to be almost equal to SeeD. She easily evaded another strike from the man and slashed him across the midsection with her blade. Not being one to watch people suffer, she formed an ice spike in her hand and fired it into the man's temple.

"Well that wasn't so bad." said Sophia

“At least we got something out of it.” said Sheyna “Let me scout ahead, I’m faster than you two and with these pistols I can protect myself from a distance.”

“I don’t think we should split up.” said Andrea

Before Sheyna could argue, the air started to go even colder and the feeling of utter despair started to descend upon the three women once again. Around a corner came a group of three black hooded figures. The images of memories past were pounding at the forefront of Andrea’s mind. She was seeing her sister die, her parents blame her. Antym and Ethan getting grievously injured during their SeeD exam and many other traumatic events. before she knew what was happening, one of the figures had glided over to her and grabbed her with a skeletal hand. When the hand touched her, she found herself lost in her memories as they pounded her full force. The feeling of despair seemed to flood her every being, and she had no will to fight it. She felt herself drawing into an inky blackness of which she was sure there was no return. She resigned to her fate, knowing that nothing was going to save her.

...

Harry looked at the three Dementors as they grew closer and closer, he’d never cast this spell before, and he wasn’t even sure if it would work, but he had to try something. Pulling the magic out of himself, he focused on casting it. Immediately his fingers began drawing runes in the air around him. It was so fast that he barely recognized the movement. The runes began to glow with a silvery-white light and the area was surrounded in a similar color. several balls of blue-white energy surrounded the three creatures. There was a sound like something ethereal shrieking and suddenly the three Dementors were engulfed in a brilliant white light emanating from the orbs of energy. The light formed a pillar around each of the creatures and soon the air was filled with the most horrible sound Harry had ever heard. He could only think of it as the Dementors screaming.

As the light died away, so too did the sound of the Dementors’ agony. Nothing remained of the foul creatures, save three scorch marks where they had been standing. He continued up the stairway until he

heard the sounds of battle coming from somewhere, he figured it was more Strife soldiers, but he had to be sure. Holding both his and Andrea's gunblades he shifted invisible once more. As he crept down the hallway he could feel the presence of more Dementors, this time images of his last term at Hogwarts plagued his mind, but thanks to the GF's it was only a murmur.

The sounds of battle slowly died down, and in their place was an unnatural silence. The Dementors' effects were getting stronger, so he headed in that direction. What he found made his blood run cold. Three Dementors surrounded three figures. Three figures that he immediately recognized. One of the Dementors grabbed Andrea and lowered its hood. Harry started to act without thinking. He gathered as much magic as he could and channeled it into the two gunblades. Concentrating on the Holy spell he surrounded the blades in a white aura. In an instant he was rushing forward and slashing the sword right through the Dementor holding Andrea.

The thing let go of its prey and staggered back, in seeming shock. It let out the same awful cry as its cohorts had done moments before, then it started to turn into a black mist like substance. In seconds all that was left was its black cloak. The other two Dementors rounded on Harry, intent on avenging their comrade. Harry dispatched them readily and soon he was alone with the three girls. He pulled out his trunk and searched through it until he found what he was looking for. He didn't have much of it left, but it was one of the few items that remained from his home world.

"Eat this." he said handing Andrea a piece of the Honeydukes' Chocolate.

The SeeD wasn't in any shape to argue, so she ate the chocolate and soon her color returned and she stopped shivering. He repeated the process with the other two and soon they were all standing once again.

"I think this belongs to you," said Harry handing Andrea her gunblade. "And this too." he took her hand and felt Quetzacoatl shift from his mind to hers. He also felt a dramatic drop in power, and the

successive use of Holy spells was wearing on him without the extra junction.

“Oh and these are yours.” he said to Sophia as he dug her crossbow out of his trunk and returned Shiva to her.

“Thanks.” said Sophia weakly

“The Materia and guns are in there Sheyna,” said Harry tossing her the bag. “Have at it.”

The girl caught the bag deftly and nodded at Harry in thanks. “I’ve got something to check on,” she said, turning to go.

“We need to get out of here.” protested Harry

“Don’t worry about me,” said Sheyna “I’ll just meet you at the cave.”

Before Harry or any of the others could stop her, she was already running down the hall.

“I hope she doesn’t run into any Dementors.” said Harry.

“So that’s what those things are?” asked Andrea. “I’ve never seen any fiend like them before.”

“They aren’t fiends,” said Harry “They’re dark creatures from my world.”

“How did they get here then?” asked Sophia.

“I’m not sure,” said Harry “But I think Kuja may have summoned them somehow, Voldemort has always had control over them.”

“She should be fine.” said Andrea “We need to get out of here like you said.”

“Right,” said Harry “I think I saw a stairway leading down a ways back.”

The two girls nodded, and together they started to make their way out of the castle.

...

Outside of the castle, the city was in chaos. Airships flew low over the buildings, shooting anything that wasn't wearing a Strife uniform. Various cannons around the city were firing in an attempt to counter the airship raid. Fiends prowled the streets, preying on the unwary. Soldiers of both armies fought viciously against one another and in the middle of it all was Bastian and Ethan. The two of them had attempted to make it out of the city, but before they could, every exit had been blocked and the guards had been put on full alert. Then the attack had started.

Now the two fighters were right in the thick of things. Alexandrian and Strife soldiers were both attacking the two of them. It seemed that since they were on neither side, they were enemies of both. Currently they were up against seven Alexandrian soldiers on one side and six Strife Soldiers on the other, throw in the random fiends that assaulted anyone other than a Strife soldier and they were severely outnumbered.

"You take the women, I'll take the men." said Ethan

Bastian nodded in response and the SeeD leapt into action. The soldiers were carrying the prototype photon machine guns, and they weren't prepared for a close quarters fight. Ethan nimbly avoided their gunshots and brought his staff down on the first man's head. He followed it up quickly with a wide sweep to hit three more of soldiers. Then he brought the other end back up and struck the first man in the neck, crushing his windpipe and effectively killing him. He hissed in pain as some of the shots from the other soldiers struck him. His junctions prevented them from being lethal, but they still hurt. He used a Thundaga spell on the two soldiers that had shot him and continued to use his bow staff to its fullest on the other three.

He came at them with a flurry of spinning combos and well placed strikes. Soon he had them all on the defensive, and he only needed to wait for an opening to finish them off. He heard the two other

soldiers discharge more rounds and leapt into the air to avoid them. The shots hit the soldiers he'd been fighting, killing them instantly. He changed his momentum in the air and started sweeping his staff in an arc, toward the other soldiers' necks. He put as much strength as he could muster into the strike, calling on his junctions to boost it. When the staff struck, he was rewarded by a loud snapping sound and then another. Looking at the soldiers he could see that he'd managed to decapitate them. He shook his head at having to kill the men, but he didn't let it bother him, he was a SeeD after all.

He turned to see how Bastian was faring only to come face to snout with a very large and very angry looking Belhemoth. He barely put his staff up in time to block the horn thrust that the beast had attacked with. The blow was so strong that it sent him flying through the air where he crashed into a nearby building. He felt something give in his abdomen and knew that once again his ribs were broken. The Belhemoth didn't give him time to cast a Cura or Curaga on himself. It charged at him once again, intent on trampling him to death. He blasted it with Blizzaga spells, but the thing didn't even slow down. He waited for the right moment, and when he saw it, he used his staff to vault over the Belhemoth and land behind it. He channeled ice energy into his staff and started to spin it as fast as he could.

A blue ball formed at the center of his staff and soon he had a pale blue disc spinning around his hands. When the Belhemoth turned to face him he threw the ice disc right at its head. The disc sailed cleanly through the Belhemoth and went in an arc through the air. The blue light faded away leaving only a spinning staff. Ethan caught his staff neatly and returned to the battle.

He reached Bastian just in time to see him finishing up with the Alexandrians, he hadn't killed them as they were trying to avoid that if at all possible, but he hadn't left them in good shape either. The soldiers sported nasty cuts and several broken bones and bruises. One even looked to have had all her teeth knocked out.

"Hyne, you really messed them up." said Ethan

"One of them fought dirty," said Bastian "And nobody touches the 'boys' without paying for it, that really hurt."

“Wear a cup from now on then.” said Ethan mockingly “How are we going to get out of here?”

“Well...” said Bastian “I haven’t quite figured that out yet.”

“Cover!” cried Ethan as an airship swept low.

The two of them ducked into an alley just in time to avoid the gunfire from the warship.

“Well now we’re stuck here,” said Ethan “That thing saw us, so it’s going to keep flying sweeps until it can shoot us.”

“Carbuncle could block them,” said Bastian “But It’d take almost all of his energy to hold it for long enough.”

“We’ve got to try something.” said Ethan

“Alright, I’ll summon him.” said Bastian. He concentrated and the tell-tale green aura surrounded him. He thrust his hands forward and shouted “Diamond Light!” Carbuncle appeared, this time with a diamond instead of a ruby set into its head. It shown a bright blue light onto the two warriors surrounding them in a protective aura. It bowed to Bastian once before disappearing back into the hole it had created.

“We don’t have long,” said Bastian “Ten minutes tops, and then we’re on our own.”

“Which way?” asked Ethan

“We’re closest to the north entrance, we’ll break through it if we have to, but we need to get the hell out of here.”

They both took off at a break neck pace, heading toward the north gate of the city. The airship spotted them immediately and began firing. The bullets impacted the powerful Protect spell and bounced harmlessly off. The craft wasn’t deterred, however, and kept on firing. They rounded a bend in the street and came into view of another

airship. This one too began firing and the barrier around them began to deplete even faster. Ethan still wasn't worried, as he saw the gate they needed to exit through in the distance. Once there they could loose the airships in the forest surrounding the city. His hopes were dashed though when yet two more airships came hovering above them. Now with four heavy powered machine guns, their shields were taking a severe beating, it was only a matter of time before they fell and the two men were ripped to shreds.

Suddenly the four airships were blasted by something and came crashing to the ground. Ethan looked around and saw a whole squadron of airships flying overhead. These weren't Strife though, they bore the crest of the royal military of Limblum.

"This is our chance!" said Bastian urgently "Let's...what in Hyne's name!" He pointed to the castle. The whole thing was glowing with a white-yellow aura and an extreme amount of magic could be felt in the air. Neither of them knew what the aura meant, but they didn't waste anymore time in getting out of the city and heading toward the cave.

...

Kuja was beyond livid. The boy had somehow managed to catch him off guard, and now he was stuck, in of all things, a block of ice. But this was no ordinary ice, weather Harry had realized it or not, he'd somehow combined the ice with an Osmose spell, therefore, every time Kuja tried to break free from the spell by using magic. The ice would absorb the magic and get even thicker! He'd been trying to break it for almost an hour and a half and now he needed to take drastic measures. This was risky, but it had to be done.

"Come to me, my little puppet." said Kuja, mentally commanding his newly acquired servant.

"Go screw yourself." came the reply.

Kuja sighed in exasperation. He should have just used an Imperius Curse or another spell to control someone's actions, but no he'd

resorted to a more subtle and versatile measure, a measure that would take some time to fully manifest itself.

“You will do as I command girl!” he shouted while sending a shockwave of pain through the connection.

“Alright!” said the puppet after a few moments.

“Make sure no one follows you and continue to behave as you normally would.” ordered Kuja.

“I understand.” came the reply.

Some time passed and finally his unwilling rescuer arrived.

“Good Sheyna, now get me out of here.” said Kuja

“NO!” yelled Sheyna, but her body did as it was told. She leveled her machine gun at the block of ice and began to fire the plasma rounds into it. Soon the block of ice was reduced to a large puddle and Kuja gracefully floated to the floor.

“You should stop resisting.” said Kuja “There is no point, those nanomachines are magically connected to me, they will make you do whatever I tell you to do, and soon you’ll think the way I want you to think.”

“There is no way I’m going to...” began Sheyna, but Kuja waved his hands and her face took on a vacant expression “What do you require of me master?”

“Follow me,” said Kuja “I have something I need to procure from a hidden part of the castle, and I need you to call it for me.”

“As you command.” said Sheyna offering Kuja a bow.

The mage smirked at his new conquest, even a strong mind such as the Lunarian’s couldn’t withstand such an assault. They made their way back through the castle, finally reaching the top of the east tower.

Kuja knew that what he was looking for was kept here, and he intended to get it.

“There should be a hidden panel in the wall, find it and put your palm against it.” instructed Kuja.

Sheyna searched the wall and finally found a brick that could be depressed. Once done, the wall slid aside to reveal a white panel with a place for someone to put their palm. Kuja waved his hand and Sheyna’s right hand was surrounded in a purple aura. She placed it onto the panel and the wall began to glow with the same color aura as the one around her hand. The wall disappeared, revealing a staircase of light heading up into a previously invisible part of the castle. Mage and servant made their way into the new structure and climbed to several flights of stairs, until they reached an altar at the top. The altar was at the center of a giant rune of some kind, and on either side of the rune were two markings that looked like angel’s wings.

“Take this,” said Kuja, handing her a silver necklace with a blue stone strung through it. The stone appeared to be only half a stone, but Kuja didn’t seem to care. “You aren’t a summoner, but this should still work. Say exactly what I tell you and hold the stone over the altar.”

Sheyna held the stone over the altar and started to say the incantation Kuja told her mentally “Spirit of the divine guardian, please hear my call.” There was a flash of light and a blue light started to irradiate from around the rune etched on the floor. “I call upon thee, oh great guardian, lend me your power so that I can protect this your namesake.” The light intensified and soon the whole castle was glowing with a white-gold light. “Come forth Alexander and unleash thy fury!”

The light started to pulse and the rate it pulsed started to increase. Kuja had a feral grin plastered on his face, he had waited a long time for this day and now it was finally coming to fruition. The light gave one final pulse and then the area grew so bright that the mage had to shield his eyes. When the light died down he looked up expecting to see the divine guardian. Instead he saw only the twinkling stars in the night sky.

“What!” he yelled in shock. “Impossible, you did everything like I told you, and even though you aren’t a summoner, your magical essence is similar enough. What happened!”

“I don’t know.” said Sheyna

“It was a rhetorical question!” yelled Kuja as his eyes started to glow crimson and become slit like. “Take stone.” he hissed “I need the whole thing, but the other half is lost!” he started to pace while continuing to murmur incoherently, finally he snapped his head in Sheyna’s direction.

“Be gone from here girl, and take that useless stone with you.” said Kuja “It isn’t time for Potter to learn of your loyalty to me, go back to him and tell him something believable about your absence.”

“Yes master.” said Sheyna

“Oh and Sheyna,” said Kuja, making the girl stop. “Even though you are under my control, I still do not tolerate failure, Crucio!”

A crimson beam shot from Kuja’s hand and connected with Sheyna. She started to scream in pain and dropped to the floor where she began to writhe in agony. Kuja left the curse on for a full five minutes, enjoying the sounds of the young woman’s screams. Finally he released it and disappeared from the castle.

...

Harry and the others finally made it out of the castle after a trying ordeal with several fiends and a few scores of various soldiers. They were all very tired, and more than anxious to reach the meeting place with the others. Harry was also concerned with the lack of the Dementors’ effects. He’d only killed six of them, but there had felt like hundreds were around, now it felt normal, other than the smell of blood and smoke in the air. And then there was Sheyna. In the brief time he’d seen her again, he could tell that something was different. Andrea had already told him about her using her Lunarian powers

again, so he attributed her change in attitude to the effects of her powers, but something told him he was wrong.

As soon as they cleared the threshold, the whole castle started to emit a brilliant white-gold light. Looking at the castle, Harry briefly thought he saw a huge being with immaculate angelic wings, but it was so fast that he barely registered it. Soon the glow faded and the castle returned to its normal grey color.

“What was that?” asked Sophia.

“I have no idea.” said Harry.

“I say that was our cue to leave.” said Andrea.

“What about Sheyna?” asked Harry. “Are we just leaving her in there?”

“She’ll be fine,” said Andrea “She probably went back for some materia or something.”

“Yeah.” said Harry, but he didn’t believe it.

Once outside the castle grounds, they saw that the city was a complete wreck. Whole buildings had been demolished and others were damaged so bad, that they looked as if they’d fall any minute. Several airships burned on the ground, completely destroyed. There were both Strife and Limblum aircrafts, but the majority of the crashed ones were from Strife. All in all it looked as though the attack by Strife had been a complete success. They took a few minutes to survey the damage before continuing on. When they reached the north gate Sheyna came running from the direction of the castle, panting heavily. Around her neck was a strange necklace with half of some kind of charm on it.

“That’s what you went back to check?” asked Sophia incredulously.

“It looks valuable,” protested Sheyna. “And when I saw it, I thought it was some kind of materia.”

“Told you.” said Andrea to Harry.

“So you did.” said Harry. “Please try to refrain from doing that again, we shouldn’t be splitting up like that.”

“I’ll try,” said Sheyna “But I can take care of myself Harry.”

“If you say so Sheyna.” said Harry

They made their way through the gate and headed southwest from the city. Soon they reached the cave where they’d left Evil Forest through. Inside they found Ethan and Bastian, both sporting several new scars and both visibly tired.

“I see you didn’t make it out without trouble.” said Harry

“Doesn’t look like you did either.” said Bastian “That’s a nasty scar on your chest.”

Harry looked down, and sure enough his shirt had been ripped open and there was a long jagged scar along his chest, but it wasn’t from this battle; that was from his fight with the deranged knight.

“Looks that way.” said Harry, wanting to leave the matter alone.

“Where to now.” said Sheyna

“Northeast of here is where the Iafa Tree is supposed to be.” said Ethan “Or that’s what I gathered around town anyway. It should be just below the Glacia border.”

“Well, we head that way in the morning.” said Harry “We can make camp here for the night, I for one, am exhausted.”

There was no argument about this decision, and after some rummaging, the group had setup six tents inside the cave for everyone to sleep in. They still had a long way to go to reach their destination, but they all had the will and perseverance to endure the trek. The real challenges would come the closer they got to their destination.

...

A/N: Well with this chapter this fic has reached massive length, and it's barely over halfway done, I don't know if that is good or bad, but with 200k words you have to wonder. I hope no one is too confused, a little misinterpretation or misconceptions are fine, but as long as you understand what's generally going on we're good. I'll have the next chapter up by next Saturday, or sooner if I can get enough lead chapters done. I didn't reach the mentioned 20+ reviews for the last chapter, but 15 is still good. I'm still hoping that someday one chapter will see digits with 20 or higher. So drop me a line, I don't care if it is just a one word review, although if you have more to say, even if it is something totally random about the story, go ahead and put it in a review.

Berserk

A week had passed since Voldemort had started reading the ancient book found by Henry. The book described a world far different from this one, one where magic was all but an ancient myth and demonic creatures roamed the land. It spoke of creatures called Espers, beings with untold magical strength. The author spoke of them as 'my father's people,' which led Voldemort to believe that the author of the book was at least in part, an Esper. The most interesting thing about the book was the war described within it. The author, who introduced herself as Terra, had kept a detailed record of everything that had happened to her during a great conflict.

Apparently an Empire, from a city known as Vector, had sought to release the ancient magic and harness it for their own selfish goals. They invaded the realm of the Espers, killing the weaker ones and capturing the stronger ones to do their bidding. Few escaped their grip, and Terra and her family had been one of those captured. Voldemort only skimmed the sections about what she'd been forced to do during her tenure as an imperial weapon. It didn't matter to him what atrocities one woman had seen. He was intrigued by the notion of magical suits of armor, but no specifics were given about the fabled Magi-tek weapons.

Another interesting thing he'd read, was about a mage by the name of Kefka, Terra described the man as being an insane tyrant, but Voldemort had to wonder. The book mentioned that Kefka altered the very balance of magic in the world itself. That took some planning as well as a vast amount of power. It was written that Kefka gained control of three statues that imbued the planet with their magical energies. Terra wrote that she and her comrades had destroyed Kefka, who had merged with the statues, after that they'd thought that magic would cease to exist, but after a while, Terra found out that they were wrong.

It seemed that through her companion's use of the Esper souls, trapped in stones called Magicite, they had been able to harness the power of magic during their quest. After destroying Kefka and the statues, the Esper spirits left the planet, and took their magic with them. But those that had been exposed to their magic eventually

developed what Terra described as "...strange powers of which I have never seen." She went on to describe the things that she and her friends found they could do, levitation, conjuring, transfiguration, and many more things that Voldemort was very familiar with.

It didn't end with them though, after a while, they discovered that there were random cases of children born with the same abilities. Terra theorized that with the magical void left by the statues, the planet itself was reconfiguring its energy to account for the change. That, and the planet was trying to heal the damage done to it by Kefka. She described a great deal of seismic activity taking place. The continents were shifting at an alarming rate, and there were many deaths as a result. Again Voldemort only skimmed this part, as it still wasn't what he'd been looking for.

Another secret that the book revealed was that after about forty years of relative peace, there came a time when the demonic creatures of the world were getting out of control. Their population had reached unheard of limits and it had fallen on Terra and her comrades to save the world once again. Being unable to wipe out all the monsters, they settled for disposing of them. Terra's husband, Edgar, had come up with the means to do this. He figured out that the monsters all carried a similar biological structure, how he knew this the book didn't say, but he devised a spell that would transport everything with a specified structure to a desired location. Each remaining member of Terra's group learned and perfected the spell. It took many years, but finally they managed to send every monster off of the planet and onto the moon.

Terra went on to describe the negative consequences of doing this, the spells not only disposed of the hostile monsters, but it also left some harmful creatures behind and the benevolent creatures that shared the same characteristics as the hostile monsters were taken as well, Moogles, Chocobos and many other creatures, which Voldemort really didn't care about. He was going to simply skip the remaining section, until something caught his interest once again. Terra felt extremely guilty about what they had done, she had said that some of her closest friends had been lost with the fiends; therefore she wanted to devise a way to reverse the affects of their actions. Thus she created a spell that only a person with very

powerful magic could cast. It required that the whole of a place called Figaro Castle, be placed at a certain spot on the planet at a certain time in the lunar cycle, then an incantation needed to be spoken. Once that was done, the spell would take its course and the monsters that were banished would be returned. The problem was that Terra needed to figure out how to separate the bad creatures from the good.

Unfortunately for her, she never found a way to do this, thus she never performed the spell and the world went on to eventually forget the origin of Wizarding magic as well as the absence of the creatures which formally resided on the planet. After reading all of this, Voldemort came to several conclusions.

The first was quite disturbing, especially for a Pureblood fanatic like himself. If he was to believe what was written in this book, it would mean that every single wizard was either a descendant from a Muggle, or the spawn of a half-breed. Another thing was that the 'key' that the writings in the chamber spoke of, must be Figaro Castle, and finally the place where 'Demons Loose Their Way', would be the location Terra specified. And finally, the last thing he came to realize was, that pursuing the actions that Terra never completed, would be pointless and counter productive to his goals. Unless he found a way to control the various creatures that were locked away. The matter would require a great deal of thought, and he had plenty of time to think it over.

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Harry and the others wandered the planes north of Alexandria. They had been here for a couple of weeks now, and still couldn't find a way to get past the mountains. They had tried calling the airship, but it seemed that the ship had run out of fuel, and so they had no means of transportation.

"Anyone have a suggestion?" asked Harry

"We could try and catch a few green or red Chocobo." said Sophia

"How would we go about that?" asked Harry

“First we’d have to find a Chocobo’s Forest.” said Sophia “They’re all a little different, so we’ll have to wing it once we find one.”

“I don’t suppose either of you know where one is?” asked Harry hopefully.

“Nope.” said Ethan

“Not me.” said Bastian

“I’ve got nothing.” said Sheyna

“There should be one south of the city.” said Andrea

“But south will take us back through Evil Forest.” said Harry “I really don’t want to go through that again.”

“We already beat Tesakura,” said Bastian “The forest shouldn’t go all crazy on us now.”

“We’ll find out, won’t we.” muttered Harry

Changing their direction, the group headed back to the cave they had been holding up in. Alexandria was still in a bad state, and the Limblum Air Legion was now occupying the city. The fiends weren’t giving them too much trouble, although there were a few stays left over from the battle, and they were still intent on following their trainers’ orders to kill anything but a Strife Soldier.

Harry got lost in his own thoughts as they traveled. He was thinking about random things. Like who was taking care of Hedwig and Crookshanks? How much money was left in his vault? Exactly how long had he been on Temprus? If the worlds were merging, how would having four moons affect werewolves?

“Your owl is probably fine, It doesn’t matter how much money is in your vault. You’ve been here for approximately two years, three months, three weeks, four days, five hours, thirteen minutes and seven seconds, eight seconds, nine seconds...” said Seth in

response to Harry's thought ramblings. "...and I have no idea what would happen to a werewolf."

"Those were rhetorical questions you know." said Harry mentally.

"I was tired of your rambling." said the guardian. "You should be thinking about more important things, like what you're going to do about Sheyna, or how exactly you're going to defeat Kuja."

"I have thought about that." said Harry "I think that the two things are linked though. Sheyna's been acting really weird, she hides it well, but sometimes when I look into her eyes, I can see something isn't right. I'm not going to let what happened to Ron happen to her too."

"You still need to figure out exactly what's wrong with her first." said Seth

"I'm working on that." said Harry "All I can gather is that it isn't the Imperius."

"Probe her." said Seth

"What?" asked Harry aloud, causing everyone to look at him oddly "Sorry, talking to Seth." The others shrugged and resumed walking

"Get your mind out of the gutter, you know what I meant." said Seth

"Yeah...well I suppose I could do that, but I told her I wouldn't" said Harry "Then again, what she doesn't know won't hurt her."

"Just make sure she doesn't detect you, you don't know what kinds of abilities she has with those powers of hers." warned Seth

"I'll be fine." said Harry "I'm pretty sure she hasn't become a master Occlumens or Legilimens over night."

Seth said no more, signaling Harry that he wasn't in the mood for talking any longer. Harry considered the guardian's suggestion seriously. Even though he had made a promise, protecting his friends', as well as his own, wellbeing was far more important than

Sheyna's need for privacy in her mind. After all, he wasn't going to search for her deep dark secrets, just something that shouldn't be there.

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It took them about two days to get back through Evil Forest and back out into the lower plains. It then took them another seven hours to reach an isolated group of trees. It looked as though the trees were arranged in a perfect circle and they formed a thick dome around the whole forest. Once they reached the inside of the forest, they were met by a group of moogles.

"Kupo!" the little creatures said in greeting.

Harry, Sheyna and Andrea were immediately on guard. The last moogle they'd met hadn't been too friendly.

"Come for a chocobo, kupo?" asked one of the moogles

"We need a few that can cross mountains." said Sophia "Know where we can catch some?"

"Well..." said the moogle "...I do, but it'll cost you."

"Cost us what?" asked Harry, already starting to get annoyed.

"Seeing as how mountain crossing chocobos are rare," said another moogle "They won't show up for just anyone. We each want fifteen-thousand Gil.

"That's highway robbery!" yelled Sheyna indignantly "We aren't paying it."

"No chocobos for you then, kupo." said the first moogle "Come on guys, I'm sure some paying customers will come eventually." All three of them started to flap their little wings and rise into the air.

"Wait!" yelled Harry "We'll pay alright?"

“Kupo!” said the moogles happily

“Okay, that’ll be seventy-five thousand gil.” said one of them

“Don’t you mean forty-five?” asked Andrea

“Twenty-five thousand a piece, equals seventy-five thousand.” said one of the other moogles.

“What happened to fifteen?” asked Bastian

“That was our extra special, one time only, introductory rate.” informed the moogle “Now we’re charging the normal fee.”

“Alright, I’ve had about enough of this.” said Harry “Accio Moogles!”

The three moogles shrieked in alarm as they were forcibly pulled through the air and were caught by their antennae.

“Kupo! popopo kup ku po!” they all screamed in indignation.

“Now, we’re going to try this again.” said Harry “We’ll give you ten thousand Gil, total. If you call us six chocobos that can cross mountains. And if you don’t....”

“What are you gonna do, kupo?” asked one of the moogles mockingly
“You can’t do anything to us.”

“Can’t I?” asked Harry, jabbing his gunblade with his free hand.

“Hurt us and we’ll never call you a chocobo! So there, kupo!” said the moogle

“There are other ways to torture someone besides hurting them.” said Harry mysteriously.

“Like what?” one of them was brave enough to ask.

In response, Harry applied very strong tickling charms to all three of them. He then let them go and watch them roll on the ground with uncontrollable laughter.

“Alright guys, let’s just go, that charm should wear off in a few days.” said Harry, turning to leave.”

“But what about the chocobo?” Asked Ethan

“We’ll find some other forest, with moogles willing to help.” said Harry

“Okay... giggle ...kupo, we’ll... snicker ...help. Just take this...hahahahaha...spell off us!” cried the moogles in unison.

“I’ll take it off one of you, and you’ll call us a chocobo.” said Harry “If that works out, I’ll let the next one go, and so on and so forth.”

“Okay... giggle .” said one of the moogles

Harry released one of the moogles and the little creature walked up to him and held out its hand.

“What?” asked Harry confused.

“Don’t you have any Gyshal Greens?” he asked.

“No?” said Harry, still confused.

“Twenty-five gil each.” said the moogle. “And I don’t care what you do, we’ve got a business to run.”

“Fine, just use your own greens and call us some chocobos already.” said Ethan, speaking for the first time. “We’re in a bit of a rush.”

“Fine, fine, kupo, don’t get you’re pom-poms all ruffled.” said the moogle

The moogle disappeared into the forest and soon returned with an armload of green, leafy vegetables. He sat the greens down and then put his hand up to his mouth. He gave three sharp, high pitched

whistles and two, large black birds came running from the deeper part of the forest.

“Hiya, Bako, Chino, can you give these nice people a lift?” said the moogles cheerfully

“Wark.” said the two birds in reply.

“They said they’ll do it.” said the moogles. “But they want about fifty greens apiece.”

“Alright.” said Harry “Just call some more.”

“These are the only two mountain crossers, that will listen to me.” said the moogles. “You’re gong to have to let the others go too.”

“Fine.” said Harry, begrudgingly releasing another of the moogles.

After repeating the same process as his companion, the moogles summoned two red Chocobos. Harry released the last moogles from the tickling charm and it summoned two green chocobos.

“That’ll be forty-five thousand gil kupo.” said the moogles simultaneously.

Harry sighed as he pulled out his trunk and returned it to its normal size. He opened it and counted out the necessary amount of gil. The moogles’ eyes lit up with glee as they took the money and flew off.

“Well that takes care of that.” said Harry, after re-shrinking his trunk.

“Who gets which bird?” asked Bastian

“Doesn’t matter to me.” said Harry “They’re just different colors.”

“The red and black ones can cross rivers and shallow ocean water as well as mountains.” said Andrea “The green ones are only good for mountains.”

“Well all we need them for is mountains.” said Harry, mounting a red Chocobo “Let’s get to it.”

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The trip back up to the mountain range took substantially less time on the back of a chocobo, fiends didn’t seem to be able to catch them, therefore they weren’t forced to fight every few hours. The chocobos scaled the steep landscape of the mountains with ease. Their talons had excellent traction, and their ability to carry heavy loads made it very easy for them. As night was beginning to fall, Harry called the group to a halt. Sometime over the course of their journey, he had been unofficially made the leader, meaning that no one had flat out put him in charge, but it just seemed to end up that way.

“We should rest here, it’s pretty flat, and there’s a stream for some water.” said Harry

“Sounds good to me.” said Bastian, dismounting his bird.

The others did the same, and soon they had set up camp and had a decent fire going. Each person took turns leading their steeds to the stream and soon they all sat down to a meal of canned food and water from the stream.

Harry found himself lost in thought again as he ate. How was his world doing? Were they losing the war? What had happened to Ron? What did they all think about him? What had that old man taken away from him? Why didn’t it help Ginny like it was supposed to? And most importantly, what was Voldemort up to? Harry knew he was doing something, he’d had constant twinges in his scar for the last three weeks. The emotions he was picking up were mainly curiosity and annoyance, but the level he felt them on made him nervous.

The link to the Dark Lord had been opened when Kuja and Voldemort’s spirit merged. The event had required Harry to shield his mind from two outside invaders, as well as maintain his normal defenses. This severely limited his mental resources. As a result, he had to stay away from Wizarding magic so much. It seemed that the more he used it, the weaker his mind became. The simple charms

he'd performed earlier were already having a profound affect on him. This hadn't been a problem before. During his training with Grindlewald, and his early stay on Temprus, he'd only had problems controlling the amount of magic he used. Grindlewald had seen to it that he had complete control over all of his magic. If he could find a better way to shield his mind from Voldemort, he could use his full powers more often, as it was, he was mainly sticking to Temprian magicks.

His world wasn't the only thing on his mind either, he looked across the fire and at the raven haired girl sitting off by herself. Her recent actions had been puzzling him. He was sure something wasn't right, and his original theory of it being her powers was seeming more and more false. His experience with Ron was making him extra careful regarding something like this. He had good reason to believe that Sheyna would never willingly betray him, she'd had plenty of chances since he'd arrived here, and she hadn't done it yet. She couldn't be waiting for a vulnerable time for him, because he'd slept peacefully in her presence with no witnesses several times. He'd even had to rely on her to heal him in battle before, this lead him to believe that if she'd betrayed him, it wasn't her choice.

That left him to wonder who was pulling the strings. The most obvious choice was Kuja, but it was hard to detect any foreign magic around Sheyna, as her aura had been different ever since the incident in the forest. He subtly sent out a Legilimancy probe and touched her mind. He sensed a lot of turmoil and a range of other emotions. There was anger, hate, regret, longing, hope, pain, she was a myriad of thoughts and feelings, and Harry quickly forced himself to back out, should he loose himself in her mind and be detected.

She turned to look at him and he gave her a half hearted smile in return

"You feeling alright Sheyna?" he asked concernedly

"I'm fine, Harry." said Sheyna tonelessly "I think I'll get some rest, we've still got a long ride ahead of us."

“Yeah, I’m turning in soon too.” said Harry “Just trying to order my thoughts.”

“See you in the morning then.” said Sheyna, getting up to leave.

Harry watched her leave and made up his mind, he’d do all he could to figure out what was going on with her, he’d owed her that much for all the times she’d saved him. His eyes drifted over to another young woman who had saved his life on numerous occasions. Andrea Pryde was just as much of an enigma today as she was when he’d met her almost two years ago. She rarely showed any emotions outside battle and the occasional sarcastic remark every now and then. Ever since the battle at Alexandria she had been even more subdued, and she seemed to stare off into space at random times, as if lost in some distant thought.

“Something interest you about my face?” asked the object of his scrutiny.

“Not really.” said Harry, not really caring that he’d been caught. “I’m just wondering what’s been wrong with you lately.”

“I’ve got a lot on my mind.” said Andrea

“Don’t we all.” said Harry bitterly

They sat silently for a moment until Andrea broke it. “Those things...Dementors?”

“What about them?” asked Harry

“What exactly do they...do?” asked Andrea

“They’re horrible creatures.” said Harry quietly “They live off destroying people’s happy memories, and making them relive the worst parts of their life. If they really like you, they suck your soul out in a process called the Dementor’s Kiss.”

“Is that what that thing tried to do to me?” asked Andrea appalled.

“That’s my best guess.” said Harry “I’m really surprised that you could even see them, in my world, non-wizards can’t even see their outline, but they feel their effects.”

“You killed them with Holy, but you don’t have Holy in your world, so how did you deal with them there?” asked Andrea

“We have a spell that drives them away.” said Harry “It calls for you to summon your happiest memory and use the emotion you felt from it to conjure a creature that drives them away.”

“Why didn’t you use that then?” asked Andrea

“Couldn’t think of any happy memories.” said Harry “The Dementors were a lot stronger here, so I could barely stand their presence, even with my junctions and mind shielding.”

“I see.” said Andrea “Do you think we’ll run into them again?”

“It’s possible.” said Harry “We’re bound to cross paths with Kuja again, so I’d say it was a very high probability.”

“I’ll be ready next time.” said Andrea more to herself than to Harry
“I’m going to bed.”

“I’ll do first patrol then.” said Harry “Everyone else seems to have turned in already.”

“Give Bastian next watch.” said Andrea “I’ll take the last one.”

“Why Bastian?” asked Harry curiously

“He tried to shock my Chocobo with a Thunder spell earlier.” said Andrea “Said it was to ‘loosen me up a bit.’”

“Don’t you absorb thunder?” asked Harry

“I do, but my chocobo doesn’t.” said Andrea

“Bastian it is then.” said Harry

She left after nodding to him and soon he was alone with the fire. The brief conversations he'd had with the two females had given him a lot to think about. He decided he needed to go for a run. Changing forms always helped put things in perspective. Animal minds saw things differently than human ones.

He shifted into his wolf form, as it had the best night vision and the best sense of smell. He sniffed around the area and found only the scents of his friends, himself and the chocobos. Looking at the birds made him hungry, and he quickly quelled his predatory instincts with rational thought. He started to run in the opposite direction of the birds, not fully trusting himself to remain in control. He could always change back, but if he let the animal take control, it would be very hard to convince himself to change back.

He ran down to the stream and took a long drink from the water. He lifted his head from the water quickly when he heard the buzzing of what sounded like insects close by. He sniffed the air, and found that there were several strange scents, and they were all close by and growing closer. He scanned his surroundings and caught sight of something very large through the trees. He quickly ran back toward the camp, but whatever he'd seen chose that moment to strike.

The sound of several pairs of insect wings filled his ears. Then the tell-tale buzzing of predatory bugs followed it. He started to run faster, boosting his legs with his magic. Even doing this, he wasn't fast enough. The bugs swooped down in front of him, giving him a good view of them for the first time.

They all looked exactly the same. Large bugs that looked to be crosses between dragonflies and cockroaches. They were all extremely large as well. Each was the equivalent to a full grown pony. Their claw legs dripping with some kind of corrosive venom.

Harry wasted no time in trying to run again, he let out a growl of rage and let fly with a flurry of Fira spells. The burning balls of magic struck the bugs and caused them to screech in agony. The cries of the four bugs ahead of him, drew the attention of the remaining swarm. Soon

the air was filled with hundreds of bugs, all with their sights set on the lone wolf.

Harry briefly contemplated returning to his normal form, but that would leave him vulnerable for the few seconds it took him to change forms, even with Grindlewald's training, he wasn't going to risk trying to dodge hundreds of attacks while attempting the change. That meant he had to rely fully on his magic and canine agility.

He cast a protect spell around himself and followed it quickly with a haste spell. The two spells took effect just in time for him to block three charges from the first attackers and dodge another five from some more. He started to blast chunks out of the air with well aimed Flare spells. He was using his tail as the focusing point for the spells, that way he could aim them more efficiently. He lashed his tail in the direction of another group of bugs that were preparing to dive bomb him. A large lance of electricity cracked through the air and turned the ten bees to ashes. Harry fought on in this matter for about another hour.

He didn't receive a single hit in all this time. It was then that his body started to feel the effects of fighting for so long. His constant use of magic was starting to get to him, and he began to feel dizzy and lightheaded. He ignored it though and pressed on anyway. He prepared to cast one last spell, a spell that he had only cast one other time before, and that had put him in a coma for three months. Focusing on the burning force within him, he raised his tail and swished it in a wide circle. Black energy started to cascade from his entire body and envelope the entire area and almost all of the swarm. Harry felt the blackness swallow him, and soon he couldn't see anything, not even his nose on his face. Next he felt the ground begin to shake and suddenly green balls of energy appeared all around him. Soon the balls began to explode violently in a blue, yellow and green. The display was incredible. All around him he heard the insects release one final cry before he felt their faint magical signatures disappear.

As the explosions started dying down, Harry started feeling even dizzier. His head felt as though it was going to crack open, and his vision began to blur. He was sure that he was about to black out,

when suddenly he felt a sharp pain in his left side. His eyes shot open, and he saw one of the insects that had escaped the blast. It was severely burned, but still alive. One of its claws was buried in Harry's side and the sickly red venom was going into his bloodstream. He snarled in annoyance and anger as he swatted the bug aside with a free paw. He felt as though his energy was returning, and he felt the strangest need to attack the dying bug again. He did so, this time attacking it with his claws and teeth. Once the bug stopped moving, he looked around for another bug to kill.

It didn't take him long to find one, and soon he was going around the clearing, finishing off any bugs that moved. Once there were no more bugs, he started to sniff out more fiends to kill. He'd find something to take his rage out on, even if he had to search all night. All other coherent thoughts evaporated. The wound in his side didn't even hurt anymore, and switching watches, or worrying about his friends were the last things on his mind.

...

Andrea was awakened by an odd sound from outside. She looked at her watch and saw that it was only a little past midnight, that meant that Harry should just be ending his shift and switching with Bastian. She was going to simply go back to sleep, when she heard it again, this time more clearly. It sounded like some fiends fighting each other. She crawled out of her tent, being sure to grab her gunblade on the way. Once outside she immediately noticed that no one else was up. Harry or Bastian should have been tending the now burnt out fire, and there definitely should not be the sounds of shrieking beats in the air.

She followed the sound until she came upon a white wolf attacking a group of Grats. The wolf was fighting the plants with all it was worth, using teeth, claws and brute force to pulverize the fiends. The animal was covered in several cuts and bruises, but it appeared that these didn't bother it at all. She then noticed one wound on its side, that looked particularly nasty. Then she noticed the patch of fur on its forehead that was just above its right eye. The lightning bolt shape of the fur gave the wolf's identity away. o

Harry rarely used his Animagus forms, he hadn't shown them to anyone since they had first reunited in Macalania Forest. That was why it had taken her a moment to recognize the wizard. Now that she had, she wondered what could make him fight this way. His eyes were crimson, and they held an unbounded rage. She needed to get him to stop fighting so she could clean and heal his wounds. If she left him like that, he would undoubtedly fight himself into exhaustion and then either be killed by a passing fiend, or die from a fast acting infection.

First though, she needed to help him get rid of the Grats. She blasted the monsters with a Firaga spell, the huge ball of flames conjured by the spell turned the monster to cinders. Unfortunately, some of the spell had singed Harry as well. Normally this wouldn't have been a problem, but in his current state, she could tell that the wizard distinguished anything that attacked him as a foe. The wolf charged at her, and she had no choice but to defend herself. Drawing her gunblade, she used the flat of it to block the claw strikes he sent her way. He then lunged at her with his teeth, biting her forearms and drawing blood. She used the handle of her blade to knock him away from her and then took a defensive stance.

The wolf suddenly backed away, and then started to shift form. Soon the wolf had been replaced by the snarling form of Harry Potter. His eyes still carried the crimson tint, showing that he was still under the influence of the bugs' venom. He drew his gunblade and started to advance on her. He wasn't dashing at her wildly like before, now he seemed to be calculating and analyzing her for any form of weakness. She had thought that he was under the influence of a Berserk spell, but this was something different. He seemed to be so angry and the look in his eyes spoke of pure hatred.

"Everyone will feel my pain." he said softly. "And you'll be the first!"

...

Voldemort strode into the main assembly hall of Azkaban Fortress. The majority of his Death Eaters were gathered there, for a long overdue meeting. As he came into the room, the crowd parted to allow him access to the front. And all around him his followers bowed

and some crawled forward to kiss the hem of his robes. He made his way to the front of the room and caused the floor underneath him to rise up into a high platform. He silently cast the Sonarus Charm on himself and addressed his followers.

"My friends," he started. "I am here before you now a new man, no man is too insignificant of a word to describe what I have become. I have transcended the limits of humanity. I have conquered death, and now I have gained the strength that no mortal could ever hope to possess. Dumbledore stood before me, and he was beaten, Harry Potter stood against me and he too was removed from the picture. Now the Muggles and foolish wizards across the globe dare to oppose me, but they too shall quiver before my power and beg me to spare them. And then after I've broken them down and destroyed everything they hold dear. They will again beg for mercy, but I will not give it."

"Even now the Dementors are terrorizing the Muggle world. The foolish ministries are sending wizards and witches out to deal with them, but the stupid Muggles think that the wizards and their 'Silver Demons' are the cause of their worthless kind's suffering. It is for this reason that I, Lord Voldemort, have reached an epiphany. I have come to realize that I have been pursuing my goals in the wrong fashion. Why should I condemn a Muggle-born wizard or witch, thinking that way is what almost caused my downfall in the first place."

"Lilly Potter was a Muggle-born, and it was because of her spell that I was nearly killed. Had I not taken steps to ensure my immortality, that would have been my end. I, myself once resided in a body that was 'impure'." This statement earned several gasps, and the Death Eaters that had frowned at his epiphany statement started to protest loudly. Only Voldemort's inner circle remained quiet. As they had the sense enough to know not to interrupt the Dark Lord, no matter how they felt about his opinions. "Silence!" he hissed, drawing his wand and waving it around the room. All of his Death Eaters collapsed to the floor and started screaming in pain.

The massive Cruciatus Curse lasted a full seven minutes. When he finally broke it, his followers stood shakily, and many had just learned a valuable lesson.

“As I was saying.” said Voldemort calmly “I too was once impure, but now I reside in a pureblood vessel. Having been in both types of bodies, I have learned that it does not matter what runs through your blood. Magic is part of the soul. This is why anyone capable of using magic, is better than anyone without it. The Muggles are soon going to wage war against all Wizarding kind. They won’t discriminate between a ‘light’ wizard or a ‘dark wizard’. They won’t even hesitate to imprison and abuse their own children that display such power. This is why I am going to put out a call, after wizards see that they have no choice but to fight the Muggles, they will run to me begging to join my ranks, and I will allow all those who ask. This way I shall build a new world, with wizards ruling, and Muggles being our slaves. This is the way the world was meant to be, and I shall rule it all!”

Cheers went up at the end of his speech, it seemed that if the Dark Lord said it was so, then whatever beliefs most of the Death Eaters had, they were more than willing to put them aside, if it meant sharing a part of the Dark Lord’s dream.

Voldemort left the assembly area and ushered for his Inner Circle to follow him. His circle had changed quite a bit recently. After using a majority of the students from Hogwarts in his ritual on New Years’ Eve, their parents hadn’t been too pleased. He’d been forced to terminate, Nott, Crabbe and Goyle, as well as Parkinson, Greengrass and Zabini. Now his circle consisted of McNair, Snape, The Lestrangle’s and last but not least, Henry Potter.

“Most of you are my most loyal of followers.” said Voldemort, sending Henry a pointed glare. The older wizard simply smirked in return. “That is why I am sharing this, and this alone with you. I have found a way to move this fortress. I will be taking it to an uninhabited area of the Pacific Ocean. There the magical currents are highly unstable, but they permeate the air thickly. The place is known as Gabriel’s Triangle and it is said to be where demons fear to tread.

"If I may ask master." said Rudolphus Lestrangle. "What is the purpose of doing this?"

"I will forgive your questioning of me this time Rudolphus." said Voldemort "All you need to know is that this will ensure my ultimate victory, and crush anyone that dares oppose me."

Snape asked Voldemort a question, but the Dark Lord couldn't hear it. He was suddenly taken over by a very strange sensation. Something was pulling at his mind, and despite his immense Occlumency and Legilimancy skills, he couldn't fight whatever it was. The right side of his forehead began to hurt, and soon it was utter agony. Still he fought to keep himself from crying out, and then the images came.

He was in a forest, and he was fighting someone. He was holding a strange weapon, it looked like the cross between a Muggle gun and a medieval sword. His opponent, a young woman with blonde hair, also had a similar weapon. He could feel his anger burning within him, he wanted them all to suffer, they needed to know the pain he felt inside. He lunged at the girl with a barrage of slashes. He made sure to pull the trigger with each slash, and even though he was moving extremely quickly, he still managed to augment the weapon's mechanics with his magic to keep up with his speed. The girl was hard pressed to keep up with him and he felt himself smirk in satisfaction at her growing distress.

Again Voldemort tried to pull his mind away, but an unseen force held him in place. He could sense another presence, no several of them watching the seen as well. One of them was screaming at the person, who he knew to be Harry Potter, to stop this madness. Another was laughing hysterically at the situation, and that presence seemed somewhat familiar, yet alien. The last just watched, and Voldemort thought that he knew that presence as well.

The girl managed to parry a sword strike and counter with one of her own. Her attack caught Potter unaware and the wound that Voldemort could feel in his side was made even worse. The grip on his mind lifted and he let himself drift back into his own mind. He still didn't know where Potter was, but in his current state, he was no threat to him.

...

Kuja was very pleased with what he was seeing, so pleased in fact that he started to laugh uncontrollably in his mind. He realized that the other presences he felt could hear him, but he didn't care. He could tell that one very familiar entity had its focus on him. He mentally smirked at his counterpart's curiosity. He briefly wondered which of them the more powerful entity was, but that shouldn't become a problem. If he had his way, the worlds wouldn't be merging and he'd never have to fight his counterpart. He felt his counterpart leave once Potter was wounded even more. He decided it was now time for him to leave and send his agent to intervene. He didn't want Potter to die yet, and this was an opportunity to alleviate some of the boys' suspicions regarding his puppet.

...

Harry's right side was killing him, first the bug slashed him, then the Grats had hit it several times with their whip-like tentacles, and now this insufferable bitch had cut it even more. His rage flared as he started to focus his magic and sent a healing wave over himself. The SeeD took a step back in what he thought was surprise, too bad for her that she didn't capitalize, he was going to have to kill her now. He thrust his foot out, catching her off guard and tripping her. She fell to the ground, and he sent a disarming hex after her. The gunblade flew through the air and toward his awaiting hand. After catching it he advanced on his fallen opponent.

"Stop this you moron!" he heard Seth yelling at him. Again he ignored the guardian, but Seth wasn't deterred. "You've been contaminated with a Berserk Needle attack. That has the same effect as a Berserk Spell, but this one was laced with some hallucinogenic chemicals. You have to fight it!"

Something about what he was saying made sense to Harry, but now wasn't the time, he had someone who needed to feel his pain.

"Harry stop!" Someone yelled as he brought the blade down toward Andrea's head. He stopped barely a centimeter from her skin, and the SeeD had already closed her eyes, resigning herself to the impact.

"You will have your turn to feel my pain soon Sheyna." said Harry

"Esuna!" Yelled Sheyna, and a white light surrounded Harry. He felt his rage subside and the feeling of extreme vengeance went away. He suddenly realized what he was doing and what he had done. He dropped both gunblades in shock, and he barely registered a presence leaving his mind.

"What?" He asked, looking around confusedly. "Andrea? Are you alright?" He walked over to help her up off of the ground, but she backed away from his outstretched hand.

The events of the last few hours came rushing back to him, and he then realized why she'd backed away from him.

"Bloody hell." he said mournfully. He tossed Andrea her gunblade and started to walk back towards camp. He needed to clear his mind and get his thoughts in order before he faced the others again.

...

Ginny jerked awake from the vision she'd been having, that hadn't been Voldemort, she'd first thought that it was, but then that girl had said "Harry" and then Harry had spoken and she'd recognized the voice, even though it had been cold and filled with hatred and rage. But that girl had snapped him out of it, before she left his mind she felt the rage and hatred ebb away to be replaced with a myriad of other feelings, but at the forefront, despair and self loathing.

The question she kept asking herself was how had she seen that? She'd picked up visions from Voldemort, but she attributed that to the bond formed from the ritual. The only logical explanation was that Harry was connected to Voldemort and Voldemort was connected to her, through him she'd been able to see the vision.

Then there was the matter of the other presences she'd felt. There were three others, one had been yelling at Harry to stop what he was doing. The other had been laughing hysterically and the last had simply watched as she had.

"Are you ready to go?" asked Atrum

It was now time for her to leave the Flamel's residence. They'd been very kind to her, and Paranelle had assured her that she was not a burden and that she could stay as long as she needed to, but Ginny wasn't one to impose on people and she had things to do. She knew, thanks to her visions from Voldemort, that war was brewing and even though she could no longer use Wizarding magic. She had a new ability thanks to her curse. She wasn't sure how she could aid in the fight, but she'd find a way.

"You sure you know where to go?" asked Ginny.

"Grab my tail." said the bird, ignoring the question.

Ginny did so, and they disappeared in a burst of dark crimson flames. They reappeared inside of Ginny's abandoned flat. It didn't look as if the Death Eaters had searched the place, this was a testament to their incompetence. She didn't have many belongings, and most of them she wasn't sure if she could even use now. But she gathered up her things, like the books, the few galleons she had left and the invisibility cloak Luna had lent her. She looked around for Harry's Firebolt, but then she remembered that she'd been on it when Voldemort had forced her to apparate to him. The broom was probably destroyed from such a long fall.

As soon as she closed her trunk a blue envelope appeared right above it. The envelope started to vibrate and suddenly the sealed flap opened and a voice came from inside of it. It was the voice of Nicolas Flamel.

"Hello Ginny, I figured you'd try to leave without saying goodbye, therefore I set this little device up for just such an occasion. I know that you want to help in the effort against Voldemort, you of all people have reason to want to stop him. I'm going to offer you some help in

this regard. You don't have magic anymore, but you do have something that can stand against it. If you want my help, simply touch this letter when it stops talking, it is a Portkey and will bring you to a place with people who can help you get the skills you will need. I hope to see you soon, remember just touch the letter."

Ginny thought about her options for a moment. Currently she was almost totally defenseless apart from Atrum and her ability to absorb magic. If she had a sword she could at least use some of the elementary fencing that she'd learned while practicing with Harry and the others. As it was she'd have to rely on what little hand to hand she knew from working with Tonks and Moody.

But if she took Flamel's offer, she'd be able to tap into her new skills full potential as well as learn things to protect herself. It didn't take her much longer to decide. She reached out and put her hands on the envelope, Atrum alighted onto her shoulder just as she did so. Ginny placed a hand on her trunk just as the Portkey activated. She felt the familiar tug behind her navel and then she was gone.

...

It was just a little before first sunrise when Harry made his way back to camp. He still felt terrible about what he'd almost done to Andrea. He'd tried to fight the rage, but it had been too strong. It was far easier to submit to it and embrace it. The feeling of power flowing through him was so intoxicating and he'd enjoyed killing the fiends and toying with Andrea. It was this last part that scared him. Why had he enjoyed that? He didn't like killing, or hurting people. He just did it because he had no other choice. He never reveled in it like he had the night before.

Before he reached the camp, he was stopped by a hand on his shoulder. He whirled around just in time to catch a fist in the jaw. He blinked the stars out of his vision to see Andrea standing there looking at him coldly.

"Look, I-," he started but she held up a finger to forestall any comments.

"I know you were under a Berserk spell." said Andrea "But that doesn't explain why you ran off after Sheyna cast the Esuna on you."

"I needed to think." said Harry

"So did you?" asked Andrea

"Yes I did." said Harry "What was the punch for?"

"Making me miss out on a good night's rest, and almost killing me." said Andrea

"Do the others know?" asked Harry

"Only me and Sheyna." said Andrea "I'm not telling them, and I doubt Sheyna will either, she doesn't talk as much lately."

"You've noticed it too then?" asked Harry

"Ever since we broke out of those cells." said the SeeD. "I'm not sure what's going on with her, but I don't like it."

"Me either." said Harry "But I can't really do anything about it now. I would just ask her, but she'd most likely deny anything was wrong and then be more on guard around me."

"True." said Andrea "So, when did you plan on explaining why you have a crystal with Sorceress' power hanging from your neck?"

"What?" asked Harry confused

"Don't play dumb with me Harry." said Andrea, her voice going dangerously quiet. "Ethan, Sophia, Bastian and me all know that that crystal is. We were trained to deal with sorceresses, so don't lie to me again, where did you get it?"

"Great Glacier." said Harry "From Sorceress Vadne, she knew she was going to die soon and didn't want either of the other two sorceresses to get her powers. There is only about half of her power inside this crystal."

“And the other half?” asked Andrea

“I suppose that guy has it.” said Harry

“Who?” asked the SeeD.

“I didn’t catch his name, I just know that he called himself a Knight and told me that he was going to get Vadne’s powers. We fought, I lost and Grindewald pulled me out just in time.”

“That means whoever it was is probably looking for you.” said Andrea
“And if he beat you, then he must be a very powerful warrior.”

“I won’t loose to him again.” said Harry adamantly “I’ll die before I let that happen.”

“Don’t fight with revenge as your driving force.” warned Andrea “As you just saw it’s easy to get caught up in rage and hatred, it will make you do things you’d never normally do.”

“You’re right.” said Harry. “I’m sorry about before, I didn’t mean to go after you like that, something just kept telling me that you were the enemy and that I had to make you suffer the same as I had.”

“Berserk can do that to people.” said Andrea “If it isn’t controlled you can turn on your allies and sometimes even yourself. Now that its happened to you once you should be able to recognize it and fight it better from now on.”

“That’s good to hear.” said Harry “How much further is it to the lafa Tree?”

“Like I said before,” said Andrea. “No one knows exactly where the tree is, but I know we’re getting closer to the general area of where its said to be. We should be there in another week, maybe two.

“Good.” said Harry “Maybe then I can finally get some answers as to what the hell is going on.”

“Let’s hope so, Harry.” said Andrea “Just don’t be disappointed.”

“What do you mean?” asked Harry

“You aren’t the first Offworlder Harry.” said Andrea “Every time a merger was on the way, people started to just appear, like you did. They didn’t manage to find a way back home, at least not to my knowledge. Even Grindewald told you there wasn’t a way, and he’d been here for a thousand years.”

“I see what you mean.” said Harry “I know it’s a long shot, but I have to try something, anything.”

“Well then,” said Andrea “We’ll see when we get there.”

“Yeah.” said Harry

The two walked the rest of the way back to camp in silence. After greeting the others and eating a quick breakfast, they mounted their chocobos and continued northward. The group continued traveling for another week, until they finally left the mountains and came to a valley. There was nothing but orange dirt in the valley, with a few patches of grass here and there. The chocobos had no trouble speeding over the flat ground, and soon the group found themselves at the outskirts of a forest.

They dismounted the chocobos and decided to settle down for the night, then they heard a series of loud roars, and two huge monsters came barreling out of the forest. Both had long arms and legs which appeared to stick out of a huge mouth with lots of teeth. They were grey in color and stood at about thirteen feet, they also had long frog-like tongues that bobbed in and out of their huge mouths. The two monsters spied the chocobos and immediately charged at the birds. The chocobos were alarmed and ran away from the fiends at full speed. The monsters didn’t stand a chance of catching the birds, so they turned their attention onto the nearby onlookers.

“Damn.” said Bastian “Of all the fiends to run into , we just had to find two full grown Chocobo Eaters.”

“We lost our chocobos too.” said Sophia

“Well, all that’s left to do now is...” started Ethan, pulling out his rod.

“...Fiend burgers anyone?” asked Harry, drawing his gunblade.

The Chocobo Eaters didn’t look intimidated at all by the six humans, instead they took up the challenge and charged forward. Harry charged forward as well, jumping into the air and aiming a slash right at one of the monsters’ neck and ending the fight quickly. His blow was met with one of the huge hands of the Chocobo Eaters. He was then hit in the side by another hand. The blow sent him hurtling towards the ground, but he managed to turn in the air and use his magic to reverse his momentum and head right back toward the creature’s neck.

A barrage of spells, bullets and crossbow bolts slammed into the Chocobo Eater that Harry was about to attack. The distraction from the other attacks was all the opening Harry needed. Putting a good portion of his magic behind the strike, and expertly timing his trigger pull, Harry cut right through the monsters neck, severing its head.

The other Chocobo Eater roared in fury, but instead of attacking the group, it ran off back into the forest.

“Let’s go after it!” yelled Bastian “That thing lost us our rides.”

“Just let it go.” said Harry “I’m tired anyway.”

They all agreed and again settled in for the night. The next morning the group decided to venture into the forest. It seemed to go down a slope, so it was possible that there was a river running through it as well. After walking into the woods a few miles, they suddenly heard a grunting sound coming from all around them. Then, from out of the trees a whole pack of Chocobo Eaters surrounded them.

“He’s back.” said Bastian “And he’s brought all his friends.”

“We can take ‘em.” said Harry “There’s only about...a hundred...a hundred fifty...two hundred.” he said as more fiends came out of the

forest in addition to the Chocobo Eaters. There were many fiends that Harry hadn't seen before, some looked like leopards, but had strange tentacles where their whiskers should be, others looked like living rocks. There were large troll-like creatures with spears and various insects and reptiles, and of course there were about twenty huge Chocobo Eaters.

"This could be bad." said Ethan.

The group stood back to back, ready to face the incoming onslaught. Then all at once the fiends surged forward.

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A/N: There I think that's a good place to end it . I am happy to say that the review count from the last chapter reached 24, YAY! (Author does ridiculous happy dance, then trips and falls on his face) Ow. anyway please remember to REVIEW this chapter. I will do my best to answer any questions you have, but anonymous reviewers please remember to leave an email if you ask questions, otherwise how am I supposed to answer them?

Secrets of the Planet

The monsters charged forward, intent on ripping the group to shreds. Harry and the others braced themselves as the fiends drew closer and closer. Then, all at once, they began to cast spells at the approaching monsters. Flare, Thundaga, Blizzaga and Tornado were among the spells cast by the warriors. The first few fiends were obliterated, but the ones behind them were completely unharmed.

As the first monster, one of the leopard-like creatures got close to Harry, he didn't give it a chance to attack. Thrusting his gunblade forward he cleaved the creature in two, next he immediately turned to block a horn thrust from one of the reptiles. He was then surprised by a set of talons digging into his left shoulder blade. It appeared that there were some avian fiends in the mix as well. Resigning to the fact that he'd have to rely on some Wizarding magic, Harry started to channel his energy and began to cast the most lethal spells he knew.

He decided to refrain from using Avada Kadavra since it didn't work on a lot of fiends, and if there were some zombies in the mix, it might even make them stronger. Therefore he stuck to organ boiling curses and burning spells. He also threw in some blasting and exploding hexes into the mix, just to make sure he got the job done.

Keeping a steady bombardment of spells going, he managed to open a path through the steadily charging fiends. Chancing a glance over his shoulder, he saw that the others were barely managing to hold off the remaining fiends. This was no surprise as Harry had been lucky enough to only have one Chocobo Eater in his vicinity. The bulk of the other huge fiends were focused opposite Ethan, Andrea and Sophia. Sheyna and Bastian had their fair share of large fiends too, and it seemed that more were coming out of the forest all the time.

Harry refocused on the fiends closest to him, just in time to be hit with a tentacle whip from an Ochu. These were a normal color, unlike the ones they'd encountered in Evil Forest. There were about four of them in all, and behind them trudged a herd of Grats and a few of the insects that Harry had fought before.

"This is ridiculous." thought Harry. "Seth get out here!"

“You don’t have to yell.” said the guardian irritably.

Harry started channeling his magic in order to release Seth. A green circle surrounded him and blue energy arched along his body. Then in an explosion of magic, Harry disappeared and the summoning began. The sky began to cloud over and lightning flashed brightly against the dark clouds. The monsters all seemed to stop in their tracks and out of nowhere a pair of bright yellow serpent eyes appeared. There was a sound like the cocking of a gun and a low hissing sound. Then lightning struck right in the middle of the assembled fiends. It illuminated the whole area and a showdown could barely be seen moving through the monsters. The lightning died away, leaving Seth in full view, putting his gunblade back into its sheathe. As if on cue the fiends started to fall apart, where Seth had cut them faster than the eye could see.

The guardian disappeared leaving Harry in its place. The wizard saw that all the fiends in his immediate area had been dispatched. The others were now fighting substantially fewer monsters as well. No more monsters were coming to reinforce those that had died, so Harry deemed it safe to help the others as best he could. He saw Sophia fire a crossbow bolt at a flying reptile and set the projectile a flame with an everlasting fire charm. The arrow hit the monster and with another flick of Harry’s wrist the bolt exploded sending bits of burning flesh and bone everywhere.

Ethan was surrounded by several Grats, Ochu and a couple of Chocobo Eaters. The SeeD was handling himself well, but it was clear he could use some assistance.

“Ethan, cast Tornado!” yelled Harry. The SeeD complied and Harry threw his gunblade into the forming wind. Once the maelstrom had caught the blade, Harry began to cast a Summoning Charm on it. He didn’t put too much power into it, but just enough for him to manipulate the whirlwind by changing his position, and thereby making the blade change the direction it was trying to go. He ran a circuit around the battlefield, using the deadly whirlwind to cut down over half of the remaining fiends, while making sure he didn’t hit his friends.

When the whirlwind faded Harry deftly caught his sword and whirled around to cut down an insect monster that reminded Harry of a preying mantis. He looked around for a sign of more danger, but found only fiend corpses smoking or bleeding on the ground. Looking at the others, he saw that Bastian had several nasty cuts and bruises all over his body. Sophia had a long gash on her left cheek and was limping slightly. Andrea's T-shirt had a large red stain on the side and it was steadily growing larger and darker by the minute. Ethan looked alright, but upon closer inspection one could see that he was favoring one arm over the other and he looked a little sick. Sheyna didn't seem to have any injuries at all, other than a few minor cuts. Harry sported quite a few gashes and scrapes from where the fiends had caught him off guard. He also had a dislocated shoulder, but he couldn't figure out how he'd gotten that.

"Looks like you're getting used to controlling your magic again." said Seth

"What do you...ahhh my head." said Harry, grabbing his forehead.
"Looks like I should have taken it a little easier."

"You alright Harry?" asked Sheyna, sounding genuinely concerned.

"I'm fine." said Harry

"Alright then." said Sheyna "Let me know if you need a Curaga or anything."

Harry was then convinced that something was wrong. Every other time he'd told Sheyna he was 'fine' she'd always insist that he wasn't and make him tell her what was bothering him. Now she just let him go with that simple response. Something was definitely off.

"Just give me an Elixir." said Harry "I'll be fine after that."

"I don't think we have any." said Bastian, joining the conversation. My healing magic is about tapped, and all we've got is a few Hi-Potions left."

“Does anyone have any cure spells?” asked Harry

“I’ve got a few Cura spells.” said Andrea

“I have enough energy to heal about two people.” said Sheyna “And that only means I can cast Curaga twice.”

“All tapped out.” said Sophia forlornly

Ethan just shook his head and Harry sighed.

“Well we’ll just have to make do with what we have.” said Harry “Me and Sheyna can just take the Hi-Potions. Then Sheyna can heal Bastian and Ethan. Andrea you take a Hi-Potion then cast Cura on yourself a few times. I’ve got just enough energy to cast a good Curaga spell, so Sophia I’ll do that for you.”

“No one will be doing any healing.” said a raspy voice, startling them all. The group immediately took fighting stances and held their weapons at the ready. The speaker merely chuckled at them. “You’re in no position to fight. The fiends wore you down, just like they were supposed to, and now you’ll find out what happens to people who trespass where they don’t belong.”

“Show yourself!” yelled Andrea

“Gladly.” replied the speaker. A group of people jumped from the trees and landed all around the six warriors. There were men and woman, all very different, but sharing many similarities. Their eyes seemed to glow with an odd yellow aura and they all had straight, light colored hair, ranging from light brown to platinum. Their most distinguishable feature however, was the long tails that swung behind them, each matching the person’s hair color.

“Who are you and what do you want with us?” asked Harry

“Who we are is of no concern to you vermin.” said the same speaker as before, this time he could be seen as a young man with light brown hair and hard amethyst colored eyes. “As for what we want, well, you’ll find out soon enough.”

“You will tell us now, or suffer the consequences.” said Sheyna in an uncharacteristically angry tone. She leveled her machine gun and prepared to fire.

“I wouldn’t do that.” said the man who appeared to be the leader of the group. “By the time you let off one round, you’re whole party will be nothing but a pile of dust.”

As if to illustrate his point, all of his entourage raised their hands and balls of energy formed within them.

“Alright.” said Harry begrudgingly. “We surrender.”

“Drop your weapons and remove any Materia and armor.” said their captor.

The group did as they were told and were then herded through the forest, heading toward an unknown destination. They soon arrived at some sort of settlement, the houses looked to be simple wooden cottages, but something about them just didn’t seem normal.

All around them people of all kinds stopped what they were doing and looked at the newcomers with scowls and apprehension, some of the young children even thought it would be fun to throw rocks, or cast fire spells at the captive group.

They were taken to a large building that was decorated a bit more than the others. Above its door was an emblem depicting crimson planet with some kind of rune printed atop it. Their captors herded them through the large wooden doors and through various corridors, until they reached a large room with a throne and a petite woman with dirty blonde hair awaited them. She wore robes of long silver, and her tail was wrapped around her waist like a belt. Her eyes were different than the other people of this village too. They didn’t glow like the other beings did, and they were a deep blue that spoke of a very long life and a great deal of wisdom, but they also held a coldness that made even Harry shudder slightly.

“Here are the trespassers you requested us to bring Lady Mikoto.” said the guard who seemed to be the only one to speak.

“Thank you Kaiva.” said Mikoto “You may leave us now.”

“But Lady...” protested the young guard...

“Are you questioning me?” asked Mikoto, her eyes literally burning with power.

“No ma’am.” said Kaiva quickly

Shortly thereafter the guards left Harry and the others, taking their weapons with them, alone with Mikoto.

“I’ve heard a lot about all of you.” said Mikoto “Especially you.” she said pointing to Harry

“Me?” asked Harry confused

“Yes, you.” said Mikoto “Ever since you came to Temprus through that one-way transporter, you’ve been causing a great deal of problems.”

“Problems for who?” asked Harry “And if you know how I got here, did you have anything to do with it, and if you do I want some ruddy answers now!”

“Temper, temper.” said Mikoto “To answer your questions, the problems you’ve caused aren’t for me, but I know who wants to see you dead more than anyone else. I have contacts that know how you got here, but I didn’t have anything to do with it, directly anyway.”

“Then tell me who did.” said Harry, struggling to keep a grip on his temper.

“And if I refuse?” asked Mikoto, looking amused.

“Don’t play games with me.” hissed Harry dangerously.

“You aren’t in a position to dictate to me.” said Mikoto, looking bored.
“And I won’t tell you anything unless you ask nicely.”

“Go to hell.” said Harry, he tried to conjure a dagger and throw it at her, but his magic was so tapped that he felt physically drained.

“You’ll get nothing out of me with that attitude.” said Mikoto in a condescending tone.

“Listen lady, we just want to know why we’re here and what you plan to do with us.” said Bastian

“I wasn’t talking to you.” said Mikoto, waving her left hand and sending a bolt of purple energy at Bastian. The ex-SeeD tried to dodge it, but he only manage to avoid a direct hit. The energy grazed his left shoulder, burning away a good portion of the tissue and leaving a smoking wound behind.

Bastian cried out in pain and clamped his right hand over the wound.

“Bastian!” cried the others in alarm.

“As I was saying.” said Mikoto “Ask what you want to know nicely, or another of your friends gets hurt.”

“Alright.” said Harry “But if I play along I want your word that you will heal Bastian and let us go unharmed.”

“I will make no such agreement.” said Mikoto “You’ll just have to trust in my good intentions.”

“I guess I don’t have a choice then.” said Harry in mock resignation.
“May you please tell me who is behind my coming to this world?”

“I don’t know.” said Mikoto

“Alright...” said Harry, thinking it better not to protest the answer.
“Can you please tell me why we are here?”

“Because you were trespassing in the forest, and I recognized you.” said Mikoto “I have some information that would relate to you specifically.”

“And what is information is that?” said Harry politely

“A way for you to defeat my brother.” said Mikoto

“You’re brother?” asked Harry confused

“I have two.” said Mikoto “One you’ve met, and one you haven’t, both of them don’t like you much.”

“Who are they?” asked Harry, now generally curious

“Kuja, and the other’s name is Zidane.” said Mikoto “Kuja is the oldest, and was only the prototype, Zidane was born next and he’s the strongest out of all of us, but he has imperfections as well. Then there is me, the last survivor of the Genomes, and Zidane’s replacement should he ever fail.”

“Fail at what?” asked Harry

“There are a few things you need to understand.” said Mikoto “They all date back several millennia. The reason why the worlds are merging, and some other things. Most people think that the merger was because of one Sorceress’s insane bid for power, but that was only a catalyst. The root of it all dates back to a planet called Terra. The planet was ruled by a technologically advanced race. They eventually whipped themselves out, but not before finding a way to manipulate their planets lifestream. They used it to create a being known as Garland.”

“Garland housed all the knowledge of the Terran people because he was made up of a combination of several types of lifestream. Garland worked for hundreds of years to find a way to resurrect his creators, then he stumbled upon a planet known as Gaia. This planet was bounding with life, and Garland wanted to harness the life energy from Gaia and feed it into Terra. So he created a device that would connect the two worlds. After that he used his knowledge of

Lifestream to create another device, which he planted on the surface of Gaia.”

“The device took the lifestream from Gaia and sent it back to Terra, there it was stored by Garland and pumped back into Terra. This continued for some time, but the new Lifestream still didn’t help the battered planet of Terra. So Garland tried a different approach. He began to try to merge Gaia with Terra. That would cause all of Gaia’s Lifestream to become a part of Terra, and then Garland could use the Terran Lifestream to resurrect his long dead creators.”

“This plan presented another problem. After Garland started to replace Gaia’s Lifestream with Terra’s, he realized that he would need new vessels for the souls to be housed in. As well as a way to speed up the process. That’s when he created his first living being, Kuja. He called his creation a Genome, and he endowed Kuja with a great deal of magical aptness. But as he taught Kuja, he came to realize that Kuja couldn’t be controlled. So he started work on lesser Genomes that, while lacking in power, possessed a docile and obedient nature.”

“Garland didn’t give up on his plans for Gaia though, he wanted Kuja to be his ‘Angel of Death’ but he knew that Kuja would eventually try and usurp him, so he came up with another Genome similar to Kuja. He improved on this Genome, giving him the potential to be greater than both Kuja and Garland himself, but with Garland’s new methods of mind formation, he was certain that he could ensure absolute obedience from his new creation, Zidane.”

“What Garland couldn’t foresee though, was Kuja’s knowledge of his plans. Somehow the young genome learned of Zidane’s creation and took it upon himself to transport both of them away from Garland and to the planet of Gaia. It was there that Kuja abandoned Zidane and left him for dead. Zidane was found by a thief named Baku and trained in the arts of theft, theater and womanizing. He didn’t know about his potential, or his heritage. It stayed that way for another twelve years.”

“In the meantime Garland decided to accelerate the death of Gaia himself. He created a ship using his extensive knowledge of magic.

The ship was called The Invincible and he used it to destroy whole cities across the planet of Gaia. One city was the home of an almost extinct people. They were called summoners, and they summoned powerful creatures that Garland feared could deter his plans. Unfortunately for Garland he missed the survival of five of the people.”

“After the first few attacks, Garland stopped interfering with Gaia directly. Instead he allowed Kuja to manipulate the people of Gaia and unintentionally accomplish Garland’s dream, or that’s what Garland thought anyway.”

“It was during this time of inactivity by Garland that Kuja started to grow in power. He used the knowledge taught to him by Garland to create living weapons much like he himself was. These weapons were soulless beings that existed only to cast destructive magic. They were called Black Mages, and Kuja started mass producing them and selling them to the highest bidder.”

“Kuja continued his manipulations until his schemes eventually interfered with Zidane. The younger Genome had a series of botched jobs and forces of fate working against him, but he always kept his head high and a positive exterior. Zidane eventually ran across one of Kuja’s missing creations. The Black Mage was smaller than the normal ones and called himself Vivi. Despite his size Vivi was very gifted in Black Magic and it was because of him that Zidane survived his earlier clashes with Kuja.”

“Zidane had many other allies as well, including the two last summoners, they were all that remained of the five that survived Garland’s attack. They along with two knights, a monk-turned-bounty-hunter and a gluttonous Blue Mage managed to oppose Kuja and eventually made their way back to Terra.”

“During his quest Zidane started to uncover his true power. He could only access it in times of great need, but when he did the results were phenomenal. On Terra, Garland informed Zidane of his true destiny and purpose, but Zidane didn’t want to accept it. He fought Garland and won, but then Kuja arrived. He fought Zidane and his allies, and he too was almost beaten, then something else happened.”

“Sometimes when there is a great need and a desire that comes from deep within the soul, anyone can go into a state called Trance. It hasn’t happened here since the great battle of Baron two thousand years ago, but back when Gaia was its own planet, the occurrence was much more common. That’s what happened to Kuja. He achieved Trance and his power skyrocketed.”

“He had enough power to destroy the entire planet of Terra. Zidane barely escaped, and he took me and the other Genomes with him. I don’t know much about what happened after we got to Gaia. Zidane brought us to a village filled with Black Mages that had somehow achieved sentience and were much like Vivi, he then told us all about his journey thus far and why he’d bothered to save us. He said that it was because we were all the closest thing he had to a real family, and it didn’t matter whether we felt the same or not. That was Zidane’s fatal flaw, he had too many feelings.”

“I know that he and his friends took the Invincible from Terra and used it to escape back to Gaia, then they flew it off to another battle with Kuja. After the battle Zidane wasn’t the same. He’d been missing for almost two years and then he came back to Alexandria as if nothing had happened. He came here to talk to me once, he told me that he couldn’t keep up the charade anymore, that he had a new responsibility and that as much as he didn’t want it, he didn’t have a choice.”

“Then he asked me to give his friends of message should he ever leave again. I agreed and he left. I never saw him again. The other Genomes and I eventually started to find companionship with the Black Mages. Soon after the first hybrid Genome was born, they looked like a normal Genome, tail and all, except that their eyes burned with magical power.”

“It was some time after that when Zidane’s friends came to the village looking for him. They said that he just woke up one day and left without a word. I gave them his message, and most of them weren’t pleased with it, but I didn’t really care since my obligation was done.”

“I found out later that Zidane was actually fulfilling our creator’s wishes. He’d inadvertently gotten caught up with a bylaw in the great scheme of the universe. I’m still not sure how, but he and his friends came face to face with death itself after they fought Kuja. Zidane wasn’t ready to die, so he fought back and went into Trance just like Kuja had. Using his increased power he managed to defeat Death and escape with him and his friends’ lives.”

“From the time he left, Zidane took over the mantle of being the Lord of Death. He still isn’t happy about this, but the duty was forced on him and there was nothing he could do about it. I don’t know what happened to him after that, just that he still rules over the realm of the dead and that he’s planning something, Kuja coming back has something to do with that I’m sure.”

“That’s all well and good.” said Harry “But what does all that have to do with me?”

“You’re heading to the place where Garland separated the Lifestream, and also the place where a gateway to the realm of death lies.”

“And where would that be?” asked Harry, wanting to see exactly how well informed Mikoto was.

“The Iafa Tree.” said Mikoto

Harry decided to not even ask how she knew where he was going, that would only be counter productive. Her story about Kuja had been very informative, at least now he knew what he was dealing with. He sent out a Legilimancy probe and easily slipped through her mental defenses. While she was apt at magic, the mental arts weren’t her strong suit. She didn’t even seem to notice him rifling through her memories.

He found that she’d been telling the truth, and that she had been alive for a very long time. She couldn’t die until she’d fulfilled her purpose, and as long as Zidane did what needed to be done, she had no purpose to fulfill. He looked deeper into her mind, but he barely had enough energy to maintain the probing. He was forced to back out and try to look at her mind the next chance he got.

“You still haven’t gotten to the point.” said Harry “You’ve told me why your brothers are so strong, but you haven’t told me how to defeat either of them yet, and I also want to know what this has to do with the merging worlds”

“You’ll know when the time comes, for now I think you should rest before continuing toward the lafa Tree.” She waved her hands and a surge of healing magic washed over the entire group, their cuts were mended and their bruises faded away. Bastian’s shoulder was restored and their tiredness lessened considerably.

“As for the merger, It happened as a result of Gaia wanting to assimilate another planet.” explained the Genome. “The scar that Terra left on the planet was so deep that it was slowly dying. Then one day rifts started to appear out of no where. A lucky coincidence started the process. A sorceress from another planet, by the name of Ultimecia, had been trying to cause a process called Time Compression. She wanted to rule all time and control everything. She was stopped, but the process had already started.”

“The fluctuations in time causes holes to appear in space, these weren’t black holes, but small portals that connected quite a few different worlds. One of those worlds was Gaia. When Gaia came in contact with another planet’s energy it started a similar process that Terra had gone through, this time though, it wasn’t trying to replace another planet with itself, just restore what had been taken from it.”

“Then something odd happened.” continued Mikoto “Somehow the tears suddenly decreased, but another planet began to get assimilated by the merging planets of Gaia and the Sorceress’ Planet. This world was named Gaea and it had gone through its own catastrophe. Much like Gaia, it was severely lacking in life force. The inhabitants of that planet had been using its Lifestream as energy and slowly killing the planet. Once this planet came in contact with Gaia and the other planet. All three began to merge into one world.”

“After a lot of seismic shifts and weather fluctuations the new planet settled down. That lasted almost five hundred years, then more things

started happening. Portals began to open up again, and soon a whole new continent appeared between Eshar and the Gaea continents. It smashed into Glacia and caused even more seismic shifts to occur. This continent had been Spira, and I'm still not sure how or why it merged with the other three worlds."

"What about Baron?" asked Sheyna hesitantly. Harry looked at her and saw something different in her eyes, it was like she was back to normal, but then the cold and emptiness returned, causing Harry to mentally sigh in resignation, he was going to have to address this issue soon.

"That happened almost two thousand years later." said Mikoto "The world had begun to settle down and treaties had been formed with the many nations, but then it happened again. This time the portals brought in hundreds of people at one time, they didn't know where they were, or what was going on. They wanted to know where places were that didn't exist, and they generally caused a lot of panic wherever they appeared. After one huge seismic quake another continent appeared east of Spira. That was Baron."

"What about my planet?" asked Harry

"You're the second one to come through." said Mikoto "The process is taking a lot longer this time."

"There's something I don't understand." said Andrea, speaking up. "Why tell us all this, what do you get from it besides purpose?"

"I get to make Zidane and Kuja angry." said Mikoto "That's enough for me."

"So what now?" asked Harry

"You may leave, if you promise to return here after you finish your business at the tree." said Mikoto

"You know where it is?" asked Harry

“When you leave the city head north, through the forest, then you’ll come to another mountain range, there should be a pass through them, and once you get through there you should see the Iafa Tree.”

“You say you want purpose, but don’t you already have one?” asked Harry. “You rule here, and your people seem to need and respect you.”

“I don’t rule here, the other Genomes just respect me because I am the strongest.” said Mikoto “If any of them were to surpass me they’d gladly destroy me to take power for themselves.”

“Can’t you find another purpose?” asked Sophia “Your creator has been dead for a long time, surely you can do something else.”

“I wish I could, but Zidane and Kuja proved that you can’t go against the programming.” said Mikoto, almost sounding sad. “That’s why I’m helping you do this, if you’ve lived as long as I have with no real purpose, you only have half an existence.”

Harry really didn’t know what to say to that, so he was grateful when Ethan changed the subject.

“When will we get our weapons back?” asked Ethan

“Kaiva will return your weapons to you once you leave here.” said Mikoto

“That’s another thing.” said Harry. “Where exactly is ‘here’ anyway?”

“You are in Tran’tal city of the Genomes.” said Mikoto “If that is all, you may take your leave.”

They silently left Mikoto’s chamber, Harry sparing a glance over his shoulder at the strange woman. He began to recollect her monologue about how she and her brothers had come to be. Their master had been insane, to try and replace one planet with another, and she still hadn’t explained how this had started the merger of Gaia with the other worlds that made up Temprus.

His thoughts then drifted to the lafa Tree. Mikoto had said that it was a place where Lifestream had been sorted and now it acted as a gateway to the realm of the dead. The way she had said it though, made him think that the lafa Tree wasn't the only gateway, but one out of several. Just how many gates there were, remained a mystery.

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They spent two days in Tran'tal resting and recuperating. Harry spent most of his time alone, working on getting reacquainted with his Wizarding magic, or simply getting lost in his thoughts. His progress with his magic wasn't going too well. He could do all the spells that he'd learned at Hogwarts as well as what he'd learned to do under Grindlewald's tutelage, but the problem came when he tried to do too many of the spells successively. It felt as though something was holding his energy back, only allowing him to use a fraction of his power and holding the rest just out of his reach.

When he'd first finished his training, he'd been fine. The magic was under his control and he knew how to manipulate his energy to create his own spells. After Voldemort's Horcruxes merged back in his world, and then Kuja combining with the pieces of Tom's soul that he'd brought to this one, he found himself unable to fully focus on his magic. Now it felt even worse. He couldn't for the life of him figure out what was wrong.

"Am I consciously holding back?" He wondered silently "What reason would I have to do that?"

"You're afraid." said Seth "You think that if you let yourself go you won't be in control anymore and end up doing things worse than Voldemort."

"No that's not..." started Harry, before he actually started to think about that explanation.

Maybe that was the reason. He'd enjoyed killing Grindlewald. When the older wizard had taken his last breath and died at Harry's hands the young wizard had reveled in the feeling of satisfaction that had washed over him. Even now he didn't feel guilty about what he'd

done at all, and when he was in battle and was forced to kill another human, he found that he enjoyed ending their lives too. It was a part of him that he hated to acknowledge, but it was there none the less, and that was the part he feared would take control over him if he let his powers rage. It would be better to simply learn to control them little by little and eventually he would be able to control the full extent of his powers.

The day they left the village was rainy and cool. Kaiva returned their weapons just before they were ready to leave. He scowled at them after putting their weapons in a pile. Then, he walked off without another word.

“What’s his problem?” mused Sheyna

“He’s got a stick up his ass.” said Bastian “Probably still mad about the way his boss dismissed him.”

“Probably.” said Harry “We’re almost there now guys, after this we’ll head back here then go to Icicle Inn.

“So you’re going to keep your word and come back here when we leave the lafa Tree?” asked Andrea

“That’s the plan.” said Harry “I can’t go back on my word. I’ve got a feeling I’ll have more questions for her once we find whatever it is we’re supposed to find there.”

“What do you think is there?” asked Sophia

“Who knows?” said Harry “But whatever it is, we’ll find it when we get there.”

Harry put on a brave front, but he was worried. If the lafa Tree was flowing with Lifestream, that meant that there would be Mako radiation all over the place, that also meant that the fiends there, and he was sure that there were fiends, would be much stronger than normal. Harry also felt that something was bound to happen when they got there, his luck just wasn’t good enough for it not to be so.

Nothing more was said as they left through the forest, heading west. It took them about a day and a half to reach the mountain range. The fiends in the area were relatively weak compared to the ones in the forest, or the genetically engineered ones that Baron used. They eventually found the mountain pass, but when they got there, they ran into a problem.

“Whoa!” said Harry “Ron would hate to see this.”

“It’s everywhere.” breathed Sophia

“Please don’t tell me we have to fight whatever made that.” said Sheyna

“Knowing our luck?” said Bastian “There’s probably about five of them at least, and we’ll have to fight them all.”

“Their just spiders.” said Andrea “We can deal with them.”

“First we have to deal with this.” said Harry, pointing to the thick webs that ran across the entirety of the mountain pass.

“It’s too thick to be Caterchapillar silk.” observed Ethan “Too well formed too.”

“Whatever made this designed it to trap something.” said Andrea

“You’d have to be blind to run into all that though.” said Bastian

“They must have a way to lure their prey in.” said Sophia “We must have avoided whatever that was.”

“Let’s just burn our way through and be done with it.” said Sheyna, gathering a ball of blue fire into her hand.

“Go for it.” said Harry, gathering magical fire within his hands as well.

Before either of them could release the magic, there was a strong gust of wind from behind them. All six of them were hurled forward and into the massive spider webs that were strung along the pass.

Harry managed to twist in midair, but this only served to allow him to see behind the rest of the group. What he saw made him pale considerably.

There were humongous flying spiders. Their wings looked like those of a cockroach or beetle. Each arachnid was about six feet tall, nearly ten feet long and four feet wide. Poisonous saliva dripped from their monstrous mandibles. They had eight eyes, four large ones at the top of their heads, two smaller ones on either side of their mandibles and two even smaller eyes a few inches below those. Each eye was a dark purple and looking into them automatically filled Harry with a sense of dread.

It was at this point that he realized the eyes were meant to hypnotize him. That would leave him even more vulnerable and a sure meal for the oversized arachnids. His Occlumency quickly shielded his mind from the affects and he began to formulate a plan. Then he heard a cry of alarm from the others and realized that there were more spiders behind him.

Both his hands were stuck to the webbing, and his feet were as well. He mentally played out each of his options in his head. He could still send magic to his limbs, and if he focused hard enough, it might be possible for him to force his way free from the web. That might take some time though, and he didn't have much of it. Then he could possibly gather a fireball into one or both of his hands and burn his way free. That however, might start a chain reaction and end up burning them all alive. Seth was a possibility, but he too would take time to summon and the spiders were almost upon him.

That left Harry with only one option. He focused his magic and did something that most wizards would call an impossibility in Transfiguration. He turned the entirety of the webbing into a substance that was highly similar to cotton candy, except not as sticky, but just as fragile. The weight of the spiders that had landed on it, as well as that of Harry and the others, caused the webbing to collapse, leaving the six warriors free to defend themselves against the coming arachnids.

Harry was first to recover from the fall and immediately used his advantage to draw his gunblade and cleave a spider in two. He then cast haste on himself and turned invisible. He didn't want to get too close to the spiders, because he was sure they could still hear or smell him. So he settled for racing around and casting cutting or explosion curses at the assembly of spiders. The curses were so powerful that each one totally obliterated one of the bugs. Harry was a bit surprised at his spells' power level, but then he realized that it was because he was growing a lot stronger with the amount of fiends he'd killed.

It had been a while since he'd used a great deal of Wizarding magic, and he'd killed a great many fiends since then. He switched from using cutting and explosion hexes to using fire and ice spells. He conjured huge spikes of ice and sent them hurtling toward the numerous spiders that populated the pass. Other times he would gather a large amount of fire energy and hurl it towards the nearest arachnid.

He took a moment to check on the others and found that they were holding their own. Ethan was using Tornado spells to gather the spiders into a single area, where he would then proceed to bombard them with Thundaga spell after Thundaga spell until they were nothing more than a pile of ashes. Bastian was using a tactic similar to Harry, he had cast Haste on himself and was using it to run around and remove the legs from the spiders with his sword. This wasn't killing them, but it was enough to give Sophia a chance to hit them with her arrows. She had used a Float spell to get into the air, where she then proceeded to launch both crossbow bolts and magic at anything resembling a spider.

Sheyna was simply roasting anything that came near her. At times she would fire off a few rounds from her machine gun, but mostly she was sticking to the use of her new magical power. Harry wondered why she only used Fire spells, but he assumed it was because of her limited control of her powers. The way she'd described Lunarians, Harry was sure she would be able to do more than that once she learned to control her powers.

He was snapped out of his thoughts by a clicking sound from behind him. He turned just in time to see several spider legs come hurling toward him. The legs had sharp points at the end, and two of them managed to gore him right through the middle. He looked down at his wound in shock, it looked as if two legs were suspended in midair and somehow making a sticky red substance flow from their tips. How had he let his guard down enough for something like this to happen? Seth was yelling at him from inside his head to do something, but Harry was quickly losing focus.

He heard the discharge of a gun near him, and then the shrieking of the spider. He saw someone standing near him and made out the faint feminine outline and the golden hair.

"Be more careful next time." said Andrea, she then cast a Curaga spell on him and the wound in his abdomen began to close.

"Thanks." he said hoarsely. "You saved my life...again."

"You'll never repay me at this rate then." said Andrea a little smugly

Harry saw a spider about to eviscerate her from behind and cast an Exploding hex on it. The creature's head was blasted apart by the powerful spell, sending a thick green fluid all over the place. Harry quickly erected a shield around himself and Andrea to avoid the poisonous blood.

"Well that was fast." said Harry cheekily.

"Lucky break." said Andrea "I would have stopped it anyway."

"Sure." said Harry doubtfully.

He looked around and saw that there were no more spiders attacking anyone. The whole clearing was littered with their corpses, all having been blasted to smithereens, torn to shreds or totally disintegrated. Sophia gently touched down, letting the magic of the Float spell be released. The others moved toward her and checked each other for wounds or any signs of poison. After they were sure that everyone

was fine and had been healed, they continued through the mountain pass.

After walking for a while, Ethan saw something that made him stop in his tracks. The others kept on walking while Ethan just stood, staring in one direction.

“What is it?” asked Harry

“Look!” cried the SeeD, pointing toward a gap in the low hanging clouds.

Harry looked where Ethan was pointing and his mouth opened in shock. There was an extremely large tree, but that wasn't what shocked Harry. It was the amount of energy swirling around the tree's bough and all through its branches. Mist could be seen, hovering around the top of the tree, and this was only a testament to its height. Harry didn't get long to study the tree, because the cloud bank reformed and blocked the view of the tree once again.

“We're almost there.” said Harry, somehow relieved by the prospect of getting to the tree.

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Back on Earth, Voldemort had finally found a way to control the creatures that were sealed beneath the surface of the moon. It had taken him quite some time, but he had finally worked out the arithmetical formulas needed to achieve massive mind control. Since Terra's book, as well as others written from around that time had stated. Fiends were not particularly intelligent for the most part. They off of instinct and only a few had higher thought processes. That meant that controlling a massive amount of them was possible if he performed the necessary spells at the right time during the assimilation ritual.

Now all he had to do was move Azkaban to the required location. He had already figured out the best way to do this as well. He walked over to a large cauldron and levitated a large crystal out of the foaming blue liquid. He then banished the stone right into the

fortresses lower foundation. That was the last of several stones he needed to imbue with levitation properties, now all he had to do was activate them.

He apparated to his throne room and sat on his high backed stone throne. He closed his eyes and began to chant. Runes appeared all over the fortress. The whole building began to shake, and several of the younger Death Eaters screamed in alarm. If Voldemort had been watching them he would have laughed gleefully at their panicked state. As it was, the Dark Lord was too busy channeling energy into the very building itself.

If someone had been watching Azkaban Fortress from outside, they would have seen it gradually lift out of the ground and into the air. They would have seen a blue aura surround the enormous building, and then they would have seen it rise high into the air, before moving southeast, heading for the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

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A/N: I was a bit disappointed that the 20+ reviews lasted only 1 chapter, but that was alright, as long as I don't drop under 10 per chapter again I won't complain. Having said that please remember to REVIEW. Hope everyone is still with me so far. For those of you who don't know much about Final Fantasy and would like an explanation of it, or simply on the magic so that you can understand the story better, please let me know and I'll try and do that for you. For you people who do know about Final Fantasy, I hope I haven't disappointed you with anything so far. As you've read it this far, If I have disappointed you with anything (besides spelling and grammar) sorry.

That's it for now, I'll have the next chapter up soon, maybe even before next Saturday if I can get at least one lead chapter out.

Iafa Tree

A man wearing a dark blue suit and sporting long spiky brown hair that was graying in places walked through his illustrious manor. This man was Cirrus Strife and he was currently contemplating the meeting he'd just returned from. The attack on Alexandria had been moderately successful, but the overall damage was merely superficial. None of the key people were dead and the losses to their military had been about the only high point.

Then there was the matter of the group that kept getting in Strife's way. They'd come from out of nowhere. After he'd ordered the destruction of Chaos Flame's hideout, he'd thought that anyone besides Baron and SeeD would stay out of his way, but no, this group of upstarts just couldn't mind their own business. They'd even gone as far as to stowaway on one of his ships and highjack one of his aircrafts.

If there was one thing that irritated him, it was people who got in his way. His family wasn't known for their passiveness, and he was going to show these interlopers what happened when you got in the way of Strife. The six warriors were only part of his contemplation though. The other was a silver haired man by the name of Kuja.

They had just finished discussing an agreement that would ensure his place as supreme monarch of the planet. Most would say that this was an unattainable goal that only fools strived for, he felt differently. To him control of the world was the only way to preserve peace and insure prosperity. If things remained the way they were, it would only serve to start more wars and end up costing everyone more time, blood and money down the line.

If Kuja's plan came through, he would have control of a sorceress whose power dwarfed that of even Baron's pet sorceress. It was no secret that Sorceress Anastasia was assembling an army just a few miles south of the very city his manor overlooked. She wanted control of the planet just as much as he did, what Kuja proposed was a truce agreement, that would allow both himself and Anastasia to use the others resources in order to topple Baron and SeeD.

Thinking of Baron brought up more morbid thoughts. Strife and the Black Wings had worked together to get SeeD out of the way, but it was only a temporary arrangement. As soon as the Gardens were out of sight, Baron had turned on Strife and began to fight them. If that wasn't enough, there had recently been a battle in a deserted portion of Myst. That battle had cost both sides greatly, but Strife had taken the majority of the losses.

"All because of those damn Dark Knights." thought Strife angrily.

Baron had recently revived a type of warrior that hadn't been seen since the last merger. The Dark Knights wielded the power of shadow, as well as a good deal of elemental control. Combine this with their impressive sword skill, and you have a warrior that was nigh unbeatable. This wasn't to say that they were invincible though. As he'd seen for himself from footage of the battle, the Dark Knights fell just as easily to an airship bombardment as well as a regular soldier, granted that they didn't block it with a magical shield.

Then there was one Dark Knight in particular. Cirrus had done some research on this Knight, with a little help from his new business partner, and found out that he was an Ex-SeeD and a Leonheart to boot. Everyone knew that the Leonheart family had always been SeeD and that they were among the best of the best. It seemed that the last remaining Leonheart had somehow gotten himself bound to a sorceress as her knight. It was because of this that a great deal of casualties had occurred on Strife's side.

The young knight had wielded two very powerful gunblades and used power that was rarely seen in these days and times. He single handedly brought down three airships and about eight score fiends. That was an impressive feat. The only reason why Strife's forces hadn't been totally annihilated after he joined the battle was because he let them go.

Kuja had assured him that he would take care of the young Leonheart, but Cirrus wasn't so sure. He had a nasty suspicion that Kuja was playing both sides of the fence, and it was for that reason that he didn't completely trust the silver haired mage. He needed a way to

neutralize both Antym Leonheart and the six warriors led by the mysterious warrior.

Cirrus sat down at his large oak desk and turned on his communications terminal. He typed in a series of commands and a screen came up showing the strife logo. There was a ringing sound and then someone's face appeared on the screen. The build was obviously male, but that was all that could be discerned from the man's image because it was shrouded in shadow.

"Niz." said Strife in a businesslike tone. "I have a job for you and your team."

"Our team doesn't take missions as a group." said Niz, as if this should have been obvious.

"I'm not doubting your capabilities." said the president "But I think once you know the targets, you'll reconsider your position."

"Who are the targets." said Niz impatiently

"I'm transmitting their specs to you as we speak." said Strife

There was a pause as Niz looked over the newly received information. Then he responded, albeit without the same confidence he showed before.

"It will take some time." he said "We can go after Leonheart first, because we happen to know where he is, the others, especially the one with the scar on his head, will take some time."

"Why is that?" asked Strife irritably

"We like to know our targets inside and out before we engage them." explained Niz "We know a bit about six of these seven people, but the last one, all we know is that he was seen during the Blitzball finals two years ago, and hasn't been seen since. What we do know is that he has some incredible power and like Leonheart, he will be very difficult to eliminate by traditional means."

“Well I want him gone using any means necessary.” said Strife “So far he and his friends have been minor nuisances, but if I let them keep going the way they are, I think they may prove to be a lot more bothersome.”

“Understood.” said Niz “Just be sure to have the payment transferred to our account.”

“It will be done.” said Strife

“Then consider your problems already solved.” said the assassin sinisterly

The president ended the call and poured himself a glass of wine. He was just about to take a sip when his phone rang again.

“Speak.” he said irritably.

A man in a white lab coat and greasy blonde hair appeared on the screen. “Mr. President.” he said in a silky voice “Project Astral Authority is almost ready for launch.”

“Excellent Dr. Gyne.” said the president, his mood rising at the news. “I trust the data from Eshar was satisfactory?”

“Most interesting...that data.” said Gyne “I myself have learned a great deal from it. How I would love to work on some of those cyborgs or even make my own.”

“Keep up the good work doctor.” said Cirrus “I’ll be in touch.”

...

Merlin looked at the monitor in front of him. It displayed the temporal distortions caused by the merger of the worlds. Currently it was fluctuating at such a bizarre rate that it was impossible to determine the exact amount of time that passed on Earth compared to Temprus. Sometimes it looked as if it were even, other times the ratios varied greatly. At first it had been a constant of one year to twenty, then it had gone to one year to ten, then it was even and then it went to one

year to three, and now it was four years to one, an odd occurrence indeed. Merlin didn't know how to explain it, only that it was most likely a byproduct of all the interference on both his and Zidane's parts.

He used one of the many mirrors in the citadel to check on his young wild card. He and his companions were just approaching the base of the tree, and once they entered it, things wouldn't be the same. He knew what was waiting for them in the caverns beneath the giant tree, and he sincerely hoped that they'd survive it.

He hit a few buttons on the control panel and displayed a screen which showed a chamber. In the chamber was housed an artifact that held untold power, no one, not even Zidane could touch it, but its power was what was being used to fuel the mergers. This object was a round crystal that seemed to be every color at once, yet no colors at all. It sparkled brightly and it exuded an aura that screamed power. This gem was simply known as The Crystal, and it was for this artifact that the citadel was named.

Looking at the crystal, he saw that its aura was different from the last time he'd seen it. It was darker than before, and if he wasn't seeing things, he could have sworn he saw a slight crack in the crystal's surface. He focused on it again, but this time he didn't see anything out of the ordinary. The only oddity was the slightly darker aura. As much as studying the source of all power was, he had other things to do and so he went back to carefully monitoring the temporal distortions and recalibrating machines when necessary. All the while hoping against hope that Harry would persevere yet another trying challenge.

...

Ginny collapsed onto her hard steel bed after a day of training, she'd been in this place for four months now, and she still didn't like it, but she reminded herself that if she wanted to survive without magic, then she was going to need this training. It still didn't take away the sore muscles or the aching bones. Unlike the other cadets that were training, she couldn't use magical potions because her anti-core just

absorbed the energy, making the potions no more than awful tasting soup.

She still remembered what had happened when she'd arrived. The portkey had taken her and Atrum to some kind of room. The room was all grey, with nothing to see but four walls, a ceiling and a floor. At first she'd been alarmed and thought that Nicholas' portkey had been a fake or been tampered with somehow. Then a panel of the wall had slid away and in walked Flamel, flanked by three people in all black robes with hoods drawn.

"I see you decided to take my offer Ginny." Nicholas had said. "I'm sure you have many questions, but they will be answered in due course. For now I will tell you that this is a place where Wizards and Muggles from all over the world are trained to combat the evils of the world."

"Wizards and Muggles?" asked Ginny confused

"Yes," said Flamel "Muggles have come a long way in the last century, in many ways they've surpassed wizards, while in others they are still sorely lacking. But by combining both magic and Muggle engineering, something much greater than both is created. You'll be here for a while, so I'd suggest getting comfortable. Once you leave this room there will be no turning back. You will be trained as a muggle cadet, but we'll be experimenting with your anti-core to see what abilities it bestowed on you. Your phoenix is welcome to accompany you, but he cannot flame in and out of this compound, so if you wish to leave, now is your last chance."

Ginny had briefly considered leaving, but that would have been counterproductive. She needed to learn to use whatever she could in order to help fight Tom and his Death Eaters, and somehow save her brother along the way. That had been all the incentive she needed to walk through the opening in the wall and change her life forever.

What followed for the last four months had been arduous training in muggle weaponry, hand to hand combat and physical conditioning. In addition she was taking private lessons with Flamel on controlling the aspects of her anti-core. These lessons hadn't yielded much progress.

She knew that she could absorb almost any kind of magical spell, almost being that she could still be hurt by something conjured or something being acted on by magic. Nicholas had tested two of the three Unforgivable Curses and found that she could absorb both the Imperious and Cruciatus with only a slight pain from the Cruciatus. He didn't want to test the killing curse for obvious reasons.

Currently they were working on absorbing a spell, holding it and then releasing it. Nicholas hoped that once she was able to do this, she could stockpile a certain number of curses and be able to do them wandlessly. This wasn't going well though. She was barely managing to hold a disarming jinx in without absorbing it, and the few times she did manage to release it, the spell had been either weak or it had come out in a place other than her hand.

Nicholas kept telling her not to give up and that she was making progress, but it was still a trying experience. The whole thing wasn't all bad though; she had become very proficient with double short swords and was adequate with a firearm. Her hand to hand skills were increasing too, she was by no means top of her class, but she was getting there. The scarring had also gone down, although it could still be clearly seen, it just wasn't as prominent as it had been.

She settled in to try and get some sleep, she had an early day tomorrow and the training was only going to get harder.

...

Draco Malfoy was not a happy wizard. He had been subjected to the most menial tasks over the last five months of his stay 'here' wherever 'here' was. They didn't tell him much. They just dragged him to magic lesson after magic lesson, sometimes with other wizards and sometimes just him and another of the black robed figures. He had deduced that these were Unspeakables and that they were training him for something, what he didn't know, but they'd told him that he wouldn't be returning to the Dark Lord's service and that as long as he remained within the confines of the complex the Dark Mark wouldn't be able to respond to Voldemort's summons.

This last was a great benefit. Draco had no desire to return to the Dark Lord's service. He'd seen first hand how crazy the monster was. He had been willing to sacrifice his own followers simply for an increase in his own power. Draco admired the Slytherin nature, but when that nature directly harmed him, he couldn't help but have a few misgivings.

So it was that he accepted the training and did his best to improve. In addition to the magical training, they had forced him to learn Muggle dueling techniques. At first he'd scoffed at this, but when they refused to give him a wand and put him in a room with people who seemed to enjoy beating him to a bloody pulp, he hadn't really had a choice but to learn. They had also trained him in non-magical weaponry. He admitted that there was some value in this; if he ever lost his wand he could feasibly still defend himself if he had other disciplines.

In addition to practical magic, he also was required to learn potions, unlike at Hogwarts, there was no Professor Snape to give him an easy O, nor were there Gryffindors to torment. It was simply a group of people mixing highly volatile ingredients in boiling cauldrons. There were also no partners and very few instructions, Draco had ruined more than one potion, and had paid for it with extra physical conditioning. As a result of this, Draco had lost much of his thin and pompous looking appearance, he was by no means bulky, but he looked a lot less like a ferret now.

This is how his days continued for some time, until the day when he began phase two of his training that was when things took a turn, both for the better and for the worse.

...

Harry looked up at the towering bough of the Iafa Tree. From far away it had been impressive, but from close up, it was simply awesome. The tree stretched at least fifty stories high and its foliage extended in a canopy that had a fifty foot radius. Roots were piled on top of roots, sucking all nutrients from the ground, leaving a dry circle of earth around the tree. Small balls of energy that flew around like insects floated all around. Sophia explained to Harry that these were Pyreflies, they congregated wherever there was an intense amount of

magic or extensive lifestream pockets, and the lafa Tree was rumored to have both.

As the group got closer to the tree, Harry saw a root that was thicker than the others, and seemed to serve as a walkway to the trunk itself. Taking the initiative he walked onto the root and began heading toward the trunk. The others quickly followed, keeping their weapons drawn. They hadn't seen any fiends yet, but areas like this were usually crawling with them, so letting one's guard down wasn't an option.

They walked in silence until they reached the trunk of the tree. Harry examined the trunk, but it seemed as though it was a normal tree trunk. He looked up and saw that the branches seemed to be just as sturdy as the roots were.

"I'm going up." said Harry. He then found some foot holes and began to climb up the tree.

It didn't take him long to reach the lower branches, after pulling himself up he had to quickly duck an incoming fireball from a flying fiend. The branches were crawling with them, and as the others came up onto the branches they too had to dodge the incoming magic attacks. Harry covered them as best he could by casting explosion hexes and mixing in an ice spike here and there. He didn't want to cast anything too powerful, as he wasn't sure how that would affect the stability of the branch he was standing on.

Ethan was the first up, and he used thunder spells to help Harry cover the others. Soon they were all up and they began to make their way across the branch and toward the center of the canopy. The fiends weren't going to let them go though. They began to swarm around the branch, some doing aerial tackles and others casting magical fireballs in an attempt to prevent the warriors from going any further.

Sheyna unfastened her machine gun from her back and began to quickly dispatch the fiends. Sophia did the same with her crossbow, both deciding that too much magic could do more harm than good. They took turns moving forward, one person would move while the

others covered them. After continuing in this fashion they made it to the center of the canopy.

Once there the fiends still didn't leave them alone. The flying monsters only renewed their assault with vigor. If that wasn't enough, Grats started to come from the higher branches and down to the ones where the warriors were. Harry quickly assessed his options, if he really wanted to, he was sure that he and the others could destroy all the fiends, the trouble was that using the amount of power required for massive destruction could end up hampering their progress if they destroyed too much of the tree. After considering it a little more, Harry decided that he would rather be alive and without access to the tree, then dead or injured.

"Time to show them what we've got." said Harry

"I was hoping you'd say that." said Bastian gathering a massive ball of blue ice energy into both of his hands.

"Just try not to destroy too much of the tree." said Harry "We still need to get to the inside."

"The tree won't be damaged." said Sheyna

"How do you know?" asked Harry

She didn't answer him, instead she allowed her magical aura to flare and refastened her machine gun. In seconds the air was awash with blue flames and lightning bolts from the raven haired Lunarian. The others quickly followed, unleashing magical fury upon the assembled monsters. Harry cast his many flare spells, and through in a Freeze spell or two here and there.

Once they had put a sizable dent into the incoming fiends, they began to ascend up the tree once more. At about the halfway up the tree, Harry noticed a large hole in the trunk. Thinking that this was most likely the way in, Harry called the group to a halt and turned to address them.

"I've got a feeling that once we go through here there'll be no turning back." He said seriously "You all came with me because you wanted to, and I appreciate it, but if you want to leave now, I won't hold it against you."

"Just keep going." said Andrea "We didn't come this far just to leave."

"I know that." said Harry. "But I'd have felt bad if I didn't give you an easy out."

"We're with you man." said Ethan "Why can't you just accept that?"

"We've all got our reasons." said Sheyna "I'll stay with you, just like I told you I would."

"SeeDs live for this kind of thing." said Sophia

"You still have to help me liberate Spira." said Bastian "And I'm not letting you die until you do it."

"Alright then." said Harry "Let's go."

With that said the young wizard squared his shoulders and walked through into the dark hole, followed closely by his five companions.

...

Zidane was in a very melancholy mood. He was satisfied that Kuja was causing massive amounts of destruction to the planet, the more deaths he caused, the more people Zidane could recruit for his ultimate battle. On the other hand, Kuja was dabbling in things he should not. Zidane had been furious when he found out that his brother had tried to procure Alexander. The last thing Zidane needed was for the Aeons to become directly involved in his affairs, and if Kuja tried a stunt like that again, that was exactly what would happen.

Another sour note was the fact that Harry Potter was now inside the lafa Tree. This could be both good and bad. If Potter survived, he and his friends would come out a lot more powerful than they were before going in. But if he didn't survive, he would be out of his way once and

for all, and he and his friends would all have to go through his judgment. In order for the latter to happen, he had to make sure that he and his ally at the tree were both on the same page.

"You will be having guests soon little one." said Zidane mentally

"Guests?" came the confused and somewhat sleepy reply

"I know it's been a while since you've actually seen someone, let alone fought them, but do you think you have the power to succeed?" He asked his contact.

"How many are there, and how strong are they?" Came the reply

"Six of them, one is almost as strong as Kuja was before he went into trance, the others are a little weaker than that." said Zidane

"In that case, I'll make quick work of them." said his contact confidently

"See that you do." said Zidane "Because if you fail, you won't like the consequences."

"I won't fail Zidane." said his contact "I won't fail again."

...

The inside of the tree was very different compared to the outside. Where branches and leaves had meshed together to create a walkway, here there was a spiraling pathway heading toward the bottom of the tree. Spider webs hung thickly along the path in places, and more than once a spider fiend attacked the traveling party. By the time they reached the bottom of the pathway, they all sported several new injuries as a result. After casting a quick Cure spell on everyone and making sure that none of the spider bites were poisoned they looked around for another path. They were disheartened to find that there wasn't one. They were near the base of the tree, so the hollow they were in was very massive, but all they could see was the path leading up and the walls of the hollow.

“Anyone have any ideas?” asked Harry hopefully.

“There has to be something.” said Sophia “Mikoto said that there was an extensive cavern under the tree.”

“We could try blasting a hole through.” suggested Bastian

“Might work.” said Ethan “But we might hit something important and send the whole tree collapsing around us.”

“Maybe there’s a magical entrance, or a hidden switch.” said Andrea

“Hmm.” Said Harry, scratching the back of his head. “Maybe this will work.”

He started casting revealing charms all over the area and he even threw in a few to make the floor transparent. When he was done, he found that there was a hidden room behind one of the walls, the floor revealed that there was indeed an extensive framework of caves beneath them. They went into the hidden room and once they had all entered, the room sealed itself shut and the walls, once the color of tree bark, started to glow a bright green.

“What’s going on?” asked Bastian in alarm.

“That’s Lifestream!” said Andrea. “And we’re moving down into it.”

“This can’t be good.” said Harry

“Something feels...odd.” said Seth suddenly

“What do you mean?” asked Harry

“It feels like something’s calling me.” said the guardian

“What would call you?” asked Harry curiously

“It feels similar to when you summon me, but different, and it’s not just me it’s...” But Seth never finished the sentence because Harry and the others suddenly dropped to their knees and grabbed their

heads in pain. The junction stones within them were suddenly forcibly removed by an unseen force. Sheyna was the only one unaffected, but her Leviathan Materia was pulsating with a crimson light, before it to was taken out of its slot on her bangle and floated above the group with the junction stones. There was a flash of bright light and then the stones and the materia disappeared.

“Oh...my head...my poor, poor head.” moaned Ethan in pain.

“This feels worse then a scar headache.” said Harry sorrowfully and still clutching both his temples.

“Where’d my materia go?” asked Sheyna to no one in particular.

“The same place our junction stones went.” said Andrea

“Guys?” said Bastian suddenly “Don’t look now but...INCOMING!”

Sure enough a very large something was flying towards the still descending platform at an incredible speed. The group quickly through themselves to the floor. An enormous skeletal dragon swooped over them, its bones completely black and lacking any flesh except for around its wings and a few rotting bits here and there. The monster turned around and prepared to attack once again, this time the group was ready. Having there junctions removed, the SeeDs had to rely on their materia, this severely limited their spell casting choices. Harry and Sheyna didn’t have this problem as both of them were used to working without junctions anyway.

A barrage of fireballs hit the monster as it came closer, and one extremely powerful explosion spell crashed against its skull. The combination of spells filled the area with smoke, and when it cleared the dragon was completely unharmed and still heading right for the descending platform.

Harry wasted no time in gathering his magical energy and casting the strongest Holy spell he could muster. White light cascaded around the whole area and six balls of blue-white energy surrounded the dragon. The energy balls began to revolve around the transfixed fiend steadily growing faster and faster all the while producing a pillar of

light around the creature. Then with a shrill roar the magic exploded all around the beast.

When the smoke cleared this time the monster was damaged heavily. It's wings were little more than two bones sticking out of its back and the rest of its body was severely burned, so much so that smoke was still rising from the charred bone. The dragon let out a roar of pain and fury and then it did something completely unexpected.

It opened its jaws and began to suck in the swirling Lifestream. Green energy surged into it and began to restore it to its former state. It didn't stop with just that though, soon a fully alive monstrous silver dragon loomed over the platform.

"Not good." muttered Harry

"No, not good." said Andrea "That's a holy dragon, we're in for a tough fight."

"Sectumsimpra!" Yelled Harry as he thrust his palm toward the newly resurrected beast. The spell sped toward the dragon, which was simply following the platform as it descended. When it hit, the spell caused several gashes to appear on the dragon's flesh, but it didn't appear to have hurt the creature at all. In response to the attack the dragon began to gather white energy in its jaws, preparing some sort of breath attack to obliterate the six warriors.

The platform was too small for them to have any hope of dodging the blast, so Harry put all his remaining magic into casting the same shield he did against Ultima Weapon. A golden dome surrounded the whole platform, effectively protecting the group from attack. The dragon released the attack and it exploded against the barrier, causing Harry to tremble on his feet slightly.

Seeing that its attack had failed, the beast charged the barrier directly. It clawed butted and bit at the shield, but nothing it did managed to break it. Harry however was struggling to maintain the powerful shield.

"Anyone see the bottom yet?" He asked hopefully

“It can’t be that much further.” said Andrea “Just keep the shield up, if we can make it to a place with more room we’ll have a better chance of killing it.”

The dragon suddenly backed off and began to gather Lifestream energy once again. This time it gathered an obscene amount of energy and also gathered the holy energy in its mouth. It gathered so much energy that it was concealed from the view of the warriors. Then with a roar it blasted the combined energy at the dome. Maintaining the shield took everything that Harry had. It felt like every muscle was being ripped open slowly and his skin felt like it was being caressed with a hot poker. His eyes stung painfully and every breath sent pain through his entire body. In spite of this he still managed to hold the shield just long enough to survive the attack, however, after that he was spent and collapsed to the floor of the platform.

The dragon too looked as though it had seen better days. Apparently gathering all that energy hadn’t been a good idea. Its skin was burned in a few places and it was flying much slower than it had before.

“Bring it down!” yelled Andrea. She then began to blast the beast with lightning bolt after lightning bolt. Sheyna, Sophia and Bastian all joined her in casting spells in an attempt to bring the dragon down.

“Sophia cast a Float on me.” said Ethan, suddenly getting an idea.

“Why?” asked the confused ex-SeeD

“Because you’re the only one who can cast it without junctions.” said Ethan “Hurry up and do it!”

“Fine!” said Sophia before casting the spell on him.

Ethan gripped his staff firmly as he began to float a few inches off the ground. He then focused on casting one of the few spells he could use without junctions or materia. “Aero!” he commanded his magic. A small whirlwind surrounded him and flung him into the air right toward the dragon.

Harry watched all this from his position on the ground and found a new respect for Ethan. He knew that he was a good fighter, but to do a bold move like that, was both very foolish and very brave. The SeeD was like a human propeller as the wind spiraled around him. He caught the dragon off guard with a barrage of staff strikes to the head. The wind began to die down and he used his staff to vault onto the dragon's back. At this point the others stopped their spell casting, too afraid that they'd hit their comrade by mistake. The beast's attention was firmly on Ethan now, and it bucked and clawed at the SeeD in an attempt to throw him off its back.

Ethan managed to keep a grip on the dragon's back and slowly made his way up to its head. Using his Fire Materia, Ethan turned his metal staff into a red hot poker. When the dragon turned its head toward the SeeD, Ethan ruthlessly drove his staff through the beast's eye, puncturing its brain and killing it instantly. Unfortunately for Ethan the dragon had been preparing to blast him with another breath attack. The energy was now trapped within the monster's diaphragm and began to surge out of control.

The beast's belly exploded outward with white energy and its lower back and hind section followed shortly thereafter. Harry watched in horror as the head and neck portion did the same and Ethan was sent hurtling into the flowing lifestream.

"Ethan!" cried the others in alarm.

Harry attempted to send out a wave of magic and levitate the SeeD back to the platform, but it was useless, the shield had sapped him of all his energy, and it took all he had just to stay awake. He wondered why no one thought to give him an Ether or Elixir to replenish his strength, but no wasn't the time for those thoughts, Ethan was falling fast and they had to do something to help him.

Before they could do anything else the platform gave a violent lurch and began to descend more rapidly. The Lifestream began to fade away and soon the group found themselves standing, or lying in Harry's case, on a rocky section of a cavern floor. They all heard a distant splashing sound and looked around for the source, but found nothing.

"A little help?" said Harry weakly.

"Oh...Harry I almost forgot." said Sophia "Here." She poured an Elixir down his throat and its affects made him immediately better.

"Thanks Sophia." said Harry, getting to his feet. "We need to find Ethan."

No one disagreed with him, all hoping that they would find their friend, and not his corpse. They walked on, heading in the general direction that the splashing sound had come from, eventually they came to a large underground spring at sitting at its shore was Ethan, he looked completely unharmed and he was holding a large silver spear.

"Bout time you guys got here." said the SeeD smugly

"We thought you were dead man!" said Bastian, relief clear in his voice.

"Me too." said Ethan "I'm just glad I landed in this spring. The water has some kind of healing property to it."

"What about that spear?" asked Andrea

"Not sure." said Ethan "The dragon exploded and this was what was left."

"That's odd." said Sophia "I've heard of fiends turning into weapons after they die, but I never thought I'd see it."

"Well now that we're all accounted for, let's keep going." said Harry

No one objected to this and the newly reunited party continued their trek through the cavern. They walked for some time, until Sophia suddenly stopped.

"What is it?" asked Bastian concernedly

"I hear...music." said Sophia confusion clear in her voice "Like a flute."

"Now that you mention it, so do I." said Harry listening more carefully "And its coming from this direction." he took off down the pathway, indicating it to the others.

It wasn't long before they could all hear the music. It was an odd melody, possessing an otherworldly quality, yet sounding strangely beautiful and mesmerizing. After following the path for some time, they came to another immense opening, at the center of the large chamber sat a young woman with long purple hair, playing a golden flute. This was no ordinary woman however, for in the center of her forehead was a four inch spiral horn. Magic seemed to radiate around the woman and in particular around the strange horn on her head. The golden flute she played was also clearly magical. Her eyes were closed, but when the group came closer she suddenly stopped playing and looked right at them.

Two cold amethyst orbs bored into the approaching group, and when she felt they'd come close enough, she spoke.

"So you're the ones who brought me such nice Eidelons." she smiled humorlessly at them before continuing "I must say that you've gotten them quite strong."

"Give us back our GF." said Andrea

"Always down to business aren't you Andrea." said the woman

"How?" came the simple question from the SeeD

"I know all about all of you." said the strange woman "Your 'GF' as you so tastelessly refer to them are a wealth of information."

"She's bluffing." said Harry "She's probably been watching us since we got in here. That's how she knew your name."

"Seth did say you were a smart one, when you weren't jumping head first into things anyway." said the woman "Of course he didn't give the

information out willingly, but after a bit of persuasion he didn't mind so much."

"What did you do?" asked Harry heatedly

"All I did was summon them." said the woman "Its what I do."

"So you're a summoner?" asked Bastian sarcastically "I don't know what you did, but I know that summoners are a dead race, there aren't anymore anywhere."

"You're right, summoners are a dead race." said the woman before her voice took on a deadly edge. "But I didn't need you to tell me that. I'm the last one, but no one will ever know that, because you won't be getting out of here to tell them."

"Wanna bet?" asked Sheyna forgoing the machine gun and letting her magical aura flare. "I'll make sure I get out of here, even if it means destroying you."

"A firebug." said the woman in a bored tone. "You can't even use the other elements of your power, pitiful and you call yourself a Lunarian."

"Die!" yelled Sheyna gathering a large blue fireball in both hands and throwing it at the purple haired woman. The fireball impacted a force field a few feet away from the woman where it dissipated harmlessly.

"My turn." said the woman "Leviathan, Shiva, Quetzacoatl, Carbuncle, Pandamona, Seth COME FORTH."

Magic shimmered all around the woman and a large red rune appeared beneath where she was sitting. Energy crackled through the air, and soon six dark portals opened up. Through the portals the six GF emerged. Each looked normal, except for the empty look in their eyes.

The entire group took a step back in surprise and alarm. This was an awesome feat of power, and the GF looked like they would have no problem killing their former masters.

"I'll take Seth." said Harry "I know his fighting style the best."

"The snake is mine." said Sheyna

"I'll take Quetzacoatl ." said Sophia "It'll be easier for me to hit him with him flying around."

"I'll get Pandamona then." said Andrea "We should leave Carbuncle alone since he's mainly a defense GF."

"I've got Shiva then." said Bastian

"I'll help where I'm needed, and keep the little rat from bothering you too much."

The impromptu strategy meeting only took a few seconds, and in that time the GF had fully emerged from their portals and sat awaiting orders from their new mistress.

"Attack!" was the simple command. She then began to blow her flute once more, but this time in a melody that had a dangerous edge. The GF strode forward in a mechanical fashion each ready to kill.

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Sheyna leapt backwards to avoid the lunge from Leviathan's jaws. The sea serpent twisted around to strike with its tail, but Sheyna leapt over this as well. The foreign voice that had long since taken over made her gather a ball of lightning in her hands and thrust it back at the guardian. The lightning bolt hit its mark, but the beast retaliated by launching a torrent of ice cold water from its jaws. The attack slammed into the unprepared Lunarian and sent her crashing against the stone floor.

"Get up!" commanded Kuja in her mind

"Yes master." she responded mentally before returning to her feet and ignoring the pain in her ribs. She had long ago stopped fighting and accepted things for the way they were. She leveled her machine gun at the monster and began to let her magic flow through the

weapon. She fired and the plasma shots were much more powerful than normal thanks to the burst of magic she'd given them. The shots struck against the sea guardian's flesh, leaving black marks where they'd struck.

The attack only seemed to make the monster angry. He roared in fury and the whole caver began to shake as he prepared to unleash his full power. A wall of water formed behind him and stretched to either end of the cavern, Sophia and Harry were both in the water's line of impact, but Sheyna didn't notice or care about this. She simply surrounded herself in blue flame and let the water hit her white hot barrier where it evaporated with a loud hissing sound leaving her completely unharmed. She saw that Leviathan was momentarily winded, so she let loose with another barrage from her machine gun before powering up another Thundaga spell. This time the spell got the job done. The GF was brought to the ground by the powerful lightning spells.

Sheyna put away her machine gun and unsheathed her katana. She let lightning and fire course through the blade and walked over to the sea beast that was wobbly trying to sit up. Just before she could finish it though, she was hit with a blast of wind and thrown against a stone column. The last thing she saw before blacking out was Leviathan sit up again and gather water into its mouth.

...

As soon as the battle started Andrea went for Pandamona. The wind GF was extremely fast and avoided her gunblade strikes with ease. It decided to use its large bag of air like a bludgeoning weapon and used its speed to its advantage by continually breaking Andrea's guard and smacking her with the large bag. At first the blows were just glancing, but soon the wind GF was sending Andrea flying across the cavern before quickly appearing in her path and hitting her with the bag again.

After the second time this happened, the SeeD was sure that she had broken a good deal of the bones in her chest as well as her right shoulder and all but one of her ribs. If she let this continue too much longer she was sure that she would die. As Pandamona prepared to

strike again, Andrea prepared herself for another bone shattering strike. The strike never came, instead she saw Ethan jump up and take the strike for her, breaking his right arm in the process. He didn't let it phase him, he quickly cast a Curaga on Andrea and followed it up by tossing her a vial.

"Chocobo Potion." was all he said before healing himself and rushing off to wherever else he was needed. Andrea quickly downed the bottle and felt the effects immediately. Her speed increased ten fold and she was sure that she'd be able to keep up with Pandamona now.

When the wind guardian attacked again she was ready. She blocked the windbag with her gunblade and countered with a flurry of slashes at the unprepared GF. Her assault was interrupted by the ground suddenly shaking. She backed off of the GF and saw that a wall of water had formed across the center of the room. It looked as though it was heading away from her, so she didn't let it bother her. The distraction provided by the water was enough to allow Pandamona to regain its composure. The GF blasted the unguarded SeeD with powerful gust of wind and sent her tumbling through the air. She flipped around just in time to block a strike from the enlarged windbag with her gunblade.

The force of the block sent her backwards where she landed on the ground and waited for her opponent to do the same. She was disappointed to see that instead Pandamona began to gather more air into its already enormous windbag. The force of the air current started to pull her in toward it, and she knew what would happen if she let her feet leave the ground, it was then that she got an idea. Instead of fighting the pull of the wind, she let it take her. She played off the wind's momentum and when she was almost close enough to Pandamona she brought her gunblade around so that the wind pushed it as well. The GF was just about to release its condensed air when Andrea drove her blade through its torso. The GF dropped the bag, sending a gust of wind into the distance. It then fell to the ground where it turned back into a purple stone with a whirlwind depicted on it.

Andrea looked around to see who needed help and saw that Sophia was having trouble with the lightning guardian. She was going to help

her out, but was suddenly surrounded in a red crystal. Carbuncle floated in front of her, its eyes glowing with the color of the crystal prison. Andrea pounded and slashed at the barrier, but it wouldn't break. She was going to try magic, but then she thought better of it when she realized that she was surrounded in reflection rubies. Casting a spell while inside here would be suicide. So she simply waited, and kept herself occupied by watching the battle.

...

Bastian rolled out of the way of another ice spike. Since the battle had begun, Shiva had been relentless. Bastian had started things off with a Firaga spell, but unfortunately for him it had missed the Ice GF by mere inches, but had gotten her attention solely on him. She had retaliated with a barrage of ice spikes, and that assault was continuing even now. Bastian focused on one of the few spells he'd learned to cast without magic. However it was a very useful spell.

"Haste!" he cast on himself, amplifying his speed. Shiva prepared another barrage of ice spikes and this time Bastian dodged them effortlessly. He now had enough speed to mount an effective offensive, so charged at the Ice Queen with his sword drawn. An ice shield met his strikes, but he wasn't daunted. Using his free hand he blew the ice shield away with a Fira spell and continued his assault, this time making clean cuts along the beautiful GF's pale blue skin. He finished up his combo with a Firaga at point blank range.

Shiva, being weak against fire, was burned severely by the blast, but was far from beaten. She started to gather ice energy in her hands, and Bastian prepared to counter with another barrage of fire spells. A shaking in the ground momentarily knocked him off his feet and gave Shiva enough time to complete the preparation for her next assault. She threw the ice energy at the downed mercenary. The attack hit its mark and Bastian was soon totally incased in a block of ice. Shiva walked towards the ice, but before she could reach it a spear was jammed through her back. purple blood flowed from the wound and the ice GF collapsed to her knees in pain.

Bastian was freed from his icy prison by a fireball cast by Ethan. The SeeD then tossed him a Hi-Potion and left him to finish his fight.

Shiva slowly regained her footing and cast an ice spell on herself in order to heal her wounds. Bastian wasted no time in renewing his Firaga and sword strike combo. After a few more minutes of parrying blows with the Ice GF Bastian decided to end the fight. He'd felt himself approaching his limit break some time ago and now he had reached the breaking point. He let his energy come to the surface and used it to fuel his next attack.

"Fire Ace!" He yelled as he charged forward once again, his blade bathed in flames. He slashed at Shiva over and over in quick succession before jumping into the air and throwing his burning blade right at the Ice Queen's chest. The blade struck with a tremendous force and caused a small explosion, when it was over all that remained was a pale blue disc with a snowflake engraved on it.

...

Sophia winced as lightning struck her once again. Quetzacoatl was proving to be more of a challenge than she'd originally thought. So far she'd only managed to score a few glancing blows with her crossbow, but they did little more than irritate the thunderbird. The GF however had managed to hit her more than once with its lightning bolts, and she wasn't sure how long she could last against such an assault, if it decided to use its full power she was sure that it would mean her end.

She channeled ice energy from her materia into her crossbow and took careful aim at her avian opponent. The lightning GF halted its flight in order to gather energy for another attack. It was then that Sophia fired her frozen bolt at the bird, hitting it square in the chest. The area where the bolt impacted turned to ice and the energy that Quetzacoatl had gathered was released harmlessly around it. Sophia prepared another crossbow bolt, but was startled by the sound of the ground shaking and the unmistakable sound of rushing water.

She looked around and saw that Leviathan was preparing to unleash its fury upon Sheyna and anyone else that happened to be in the path of the deadly tsunami, which happened to be herself and Harry. She focused on her magic and cast a Float spell on herself and before it could take full effect she jumped into the air, letting the spell give her more height. By this time Quetzacoatl had regained its composure

and swooped toward her, all the while surrounding itself in electrical energy. Sophia fired her crossbow at the incoming creature, each time putting ice energy into the bolts. The attacks hit their marks and soon Quetzacoatl was nothing more than a hovering icicle.

It suddenly plummeted to the ground and hit just in time to be pounded by Leviathan's deluge. Because the lightning GF was extremely weak against water, it took no time at all for it to succumb to the attack. When the water cleared only its junction stone remained. Sophia landed back on the ground, happy to take a momentary breather.

...

Ethan looked around for anyone who needed a hand. He first saw Andrea getting clobbered by Pandamona. He realized that she needed something to make her faster in order to keep up with the wind GF. He knew the only people that could cast Haste spells were otherwise occupied at the moment. Harry had his hands full with Seth and Bastian was likewise busy with Shiva. He then remembered a potion he'd found some time ago while on the Strife ship. He checked his pockets for it and sure enough it was there.

He looked up from his searching just in time to see Pandamona preparing to deliver a blow that would prove fatal for Andrea. He wasted no time in jumping between her and the wind GF, effectively breaking his right arm, but saving Andrea nonetheless. He tossed her the potion.

"Chocobo potion." he said simply, knowing that she'd know what to do with it. He then cast a Curaga on her and himself before moving away so she could finish her own fight. His attention was taken by a tremor in the ground and he saw a wall of water form across the center of the room, luckily for him he was on the other side of it so there was nothing for him to worry about. He saw Bastian get frozen in a block of ice and knew that if he allowed Shiva to touch it his friend would be shattered along with the ice block. The Ice Queen's attention was off of him, so he started to make his way behind her.

He drove his spear through her back and twisted it to make sure it had optimal impact. He would have been unable to do this with his rod, so he was glad that he now had a slightly better weapon for this type of situation. He removed the spear and didn't even flinch at the purple blood coming from the wound in the GF's back. He cast a quick Fira on the ice block containing Bastian and tossed the mercenary a Hi-Potion to heal himself without using too much magic. He saw that Shiva was recovering so he moved away from the fight before he got in the way.

He saw Sheyna get blasted into a wall by a stray wind gust from the now defeated Pandamona. He also saw Andrea get imprisoned within the reflect rubies. Weighing his options, he realized that Sheyna was in a much more dire situation than his fellow SeeD. As Leviathan prepared to finish its former mistress, Ethan raced toward it and leapt into the air with his spear aiming downward. He drove his weapon into the middle of the sea serpent's back. The monster let out a cry of pain and fury and it lost control of its water blast as a result. The torrent of water hit the ceiling of the cavern with enough force to knock loose a few stalactites. The large spikes came down, and one struck Leviathan right through its skull, while several others hit the force field surrounding the strange summoner. Leviathan slowly faded away, leaving only a red orb in its place.

The materia however looked odd. It had several cracks in it and it was pulsating with a red light. Ethan watched in fascination as the orb suddenly burst into tiny fragments, which soon turned into little more than dust that was scattered by the drafts in the cavern.

"Leviathan." said Sheyna, now conscious once more "What happened to it?"

"Not sure." said Ethan "All the others turned back into junction stones, I guess materia wasn't meant to be summoned the way she's doing it."

"I guess not." said Sheyna, still a little dazed.

Ethan quickly cast a Curaga on her and turned to see what was left. Shiva, Quetzacoatl and Pandamona had all been taken care of.

Leviathan could now be added to this list as well. Andrea was still trapped in the ruby prison, but other than that everyone seemed fine. He looked over to Harry who was still trading blows with Seth. The wizard was holding his own, but the guardian didn't look to be giving up without a fight. Seeing no way to help the battling wizard, Ethan settled for aiding his fellow SeeD.

He ran over to the ruby prison and struck it with his spear. He saw Andrea trying to tell him something, but he couldn't hear her because of the gem prison. She then pointed and he turned just in time to be hit with a ruby light. Then he too was surrounded in a ruby cage much like Andrea's.

...

As soon as the summoner gave the order to attack, Harry had rushed at Seth, effectively preventing him from attacking any of the others. His gunblade was met with the blade of Seth's scythe and he quickly backed away to avoid being hit by the gunblade in Seth's other hand. He sent a barrage of cutting hexes at the serpent guardian, but they did little more than irritate the GF. Knowing that if Seth died he would be resurrected if Harry junctioned him again, he cast the one spell he knew would likely win the battle.

"Avada Kadavra!" he yelled, thrusting his palm forward. The sickly green light hit the GF right in the chest, but it didn't have any effect at all. Seeing this, Harry tried another unforgivable "Crucio!" This time a crimson bolt shot from his palm and hit Seth. The GF faltered slightly, but again he continued walking towards Harry. Deciding to forgo Wizarding magic for the time being, Harry rushed at the GF once again. This time he cast Haste on himself as well as augmenting his speed with magic. The results made him seem like a blur as he hacked at Seth with everything he had.

It took a moment, but soon Seth was matching him blow for blow. They parried each others attacks and each managed to break the others guard from time to time gaining a momentary advantage. It was clear however that Seth had the upper hand. He was wielding two weapons giving him a definitive edge over his former junctioner. Harry decided to do something about this and cast a disarming spell

at the guardian. This time his spell did exactly what he wanted it to do, and both weapons were ripped from Seth's hands. The guardian only had time to grab one of them before they flew out of his reach, and he chose the gunblade.

Now having the playing field even, Harry prepared to rush Seth once again. He was stopped by the sound of the ground shaking and the roar of rushing water. He looked over his shoulder just in time to see Leviathan's huge tsunami heading right for him. There was no way he could dodge, and apparation was out of the question in an area so full of magic. Therefore he braced himself and cast a magical barrier on himself. The tsunami hit the barrier and sent him tumbling over the ground and right to the feet of his former guardian.

Had Seth been in his own mind he would have smirked at the moment. Instead he simply drove his gunblade down toward Harry's unguarded torso. Harry quickly reinforced the barrier to withstand physical blows. The guardian's gunblade was deflected by the shield, allowing Harry to regain his footing and counter with an assault of his own. Seth suddenly leapt backwards and slashed his gunblade through the air, leaving a trail of fire in the shape of a holy cross. He then hit the cross with his gunblade, sending it at the unprepared wizard. The attack crashed into Harry, sending him flying through the cavern and burning his chest and stomach.

Harry staggered to his feet and dove to the side just in time to avoid another Fire Cross attack. Harry countered with a Flare spell that caught Seth unguarded. The guardian hissed in pain and fury as the powerful spell burned his skin. Harry followed it up with a Freeze spell that caused even more damage to the guardian. He used the distraction provided by his spells to run towards the recovering serpent. He unleashed a fury of slashes that the guardian only managed to block halfheartedly. He was just about to finish the battle when he felt a sharp pain from his back.

He glanced over his shoulder to see the forgotten scythe sticking out of his back. He had forgotten Seth could control the weapon without actually touching it. The guardian used the time that Harry was in shock to recover. It jerked its free hand and the scythe was ruthlessly wrenched from its position in Harry's back, the pain of the process

caused Harry to drop his gunblade and collapse to his hands and knees. He felt something hot rise in his throat and gagged as he spluttered a good deal of blood. He was no healer, but he knew that that wasn't a good sign.

He saw Seth bringing his gunblade up for one final strike. Harry gritted his teeth in determination and his right hand found his gunblade. With a roar of defiance, and pouring a good deal of his magic into himself, Harry rose to his feet and drove his gunblade right through Seth's stomach. He then forced the blade upward, pulling the trigger and effectively dispatching the guardian. Seth began to fade away and soon all that remained was a black stone with a green serpent engraved on it.

Harry reached into his pocket and pulled out one of the few remaining Elixirs he still had. He downed it and immediately felt his energy return. He looked around and saw Ethan and Andrea encased in a ruby prison. Sheyna was once again trying to break through the barrier surrounding the strange young summoner while Bastian and Sophia tried to free their comrades. Harry knew that Carbuncle had cast the spell and that it was based on a Reflect spell, therefore a simple Dispel should reverse the process. Realizing this he quickly cast the spell on the rubies, causing them to disintegrate.

"So you do have some skills." said the summoner suddenly "I see you can beat your own Eidelons, but can you handle mine?"

Carbuncle floated in front of her, and for the first time, Harry realized that it didn't hold the same vacant look that the rest of the GF had, it looked completely normal and seemed content to do whatever the strange woman told it to do. "You did well Carbuncle, dismissed."

With that the small GF disappeared leaving only a ruby in its place.

"Now I'll show you a real Eidelon." said the summoner. The ground began to shake violently and all present now realized that the true battle was about to begin.

...

A/N: Sorry to stop it there, but I figured that this chapter was long enough. I mean 10k words is a lot of reading. I had wanted to get everything at the Iafa Tree into one chapter, but hey, things don't always go the way you plan. Someone told me last chapter that I was 'demanding' reviews. I never demanded reviews, I only asked for them or reminded people to review, I see nothing wrong with asking for reviews as I took the time to write this fic for people to enjoy so getting reviews is simply a means of telling the author whether or not his work is worth the effort. I must say that I think it is based on the majority of the responses and the few criticisms keep my ego down and make me work harder to write a better story. I hope to read many more reviews from all of you and I'll do my part to make this story as good as I possibly can.

To those of you who are confused about certain aspects of the fic that pertain to Final Fantasy: I'm doing my best to explain things, the magic system is all you really need to understand and that was different in every single game, but the basics are as follows. There are a series of elements in the world of Final Fantasy, generally they work like this.

Fire Ice

Lightning Water

Holy Dark

Poison Earth Wind Gravity

What this means is that Fire and Ice are weak against each other, same for Lightning and Water as well as Holy and Dark. Usually Poison is weak to Earth and Earth is weak to Wind. Wind elementals are usually weak against Gravity. It isn't always this way, but in this story that's the way it works. As for the spells themselves, the base spells are usually something simple like Cure or Fire. Adding an 'A' to the end or an 'aga' or sometimes 'ija' means that the spell is much stronger. For instance a Fire spell is simply a fireball while a Firija spell would be an enormous amount of fire. I know that some of you were confused about the new form of magic, so I hope this helps.

Next chapter MIGHT be up before next Saturday, but I promise nothing except it will be done by then. Don't forget to review .

The Last Summoner

The ground trembled violently as the summoner played her flute, channeling magic into her horn. Then with a brilliant flash, a large rock shot out of the ground and high into the air. Atop the rock was a large wolf like creature. It was mostly dark blue, but its legs and under belly were a lighter shade of blue. A collar of pale blue spikes jutted out from around its neck and pale blue spikes with yellow tips jutted from each of its hip joints. Its tail was extremely long and its eyes were a cold red and contrasted harshly with its dark blue fur.

The wolf-like creature howled with triumph as the rock stopped rising into the air. The vibration from the howl caused the ground to shake even more, which in turn caused the spikes on the ceiling to come crashing down on the six warriors. They all managed to avoid serious injury, but they still got some minor cuts and bruises from the falling rocks.

“Fenrir, Destroy them!” yelled the summoner to her Eidolon.

The wolf now known as Fenrir leapt off of its rock and right towards its assembled opponents. The group scattered and the wolf landed in between all of them. The force of its landing caused the ground to shake so violently that Harry and the others could barely remain standing. The wolf didn't even give them a chance to recover, it chose Sophia as its first target and lunged at her. The ex-Seed fired a barrage of arrows at the approaching beast, but it didn't seem to slow it down. Mere inches away from its victim, the wolf slammed into an invisible barrier.

Harry struggled to maintain the shield surrounding Sophia. The wolf was incredibly strong and was pushing against the shield with all its might. It didn't even appear to feel the spells that were hammering it from the others, nor the various bolts colliding with its head from Sophia's crossbow. Bastian was intent on saving his friend, and made a foolish decision to attack Fenrir head on. He charged at the beast with his sword at the ready, before he could even start to swing the blade he was clawed through the stomach by the wolf.

Harry watched in part horror as Bastian was almost cleaved in two by the massive canine. Giving up on the shield, Harry began to pummel the beast with the most harmful spells he could think of. Massive fireballs, conjured blades and large spikes of ice and quite a few exploding hexes collided with the rampaging canine. The beast started to reel on its feet, but it was obvious to all that the spells weren't doing much more than superficial damage.

While Harry was bombarding the wolf with spells, Sophia ran over to Bastian and tried to heal him, unfortunately normal Cure spells weren't doing the trick.

"Those won't work." said Sheyna coming over to her. "He's dead, only a strong Life spell will bring him back, and we've only got about five minutes to do that."

"I've got a Revive materia, but I don't know if that'll be strong enough." said Sophia before concentrating on her materia and drawing out its magic. She outstretched her hands and a red glow surrounded Bastian's broken body. The glow seemed to seep into him, but then it all was forced out and dissipated in the air.

"Do you want to bring your friend back?" asked the summoner mockingly "Allow me." She pointed her palm at Bastian's corpse and a sickly brown glow surrounded it. His skin became a putrid yellow color and his hair went from a golden blonde to a decaying green. His wounds healed, but the job was sloppy and made him look even more deformed. His eyes were empty of any signs of life, but they remained open. He clumsily got to his feet and picked up his discarded sword. He then turned his attention towards a horrified Sophia and a remarkably calm Sheyna.

"You like?" asked the summoner in a mocking tone. Then her face hardened and she turned around and blasted Andrea and Ethan with a bolt of white energy. "It's not nice to try and sneak up on people."

While this was going on, Harry's barrage of spells was beginning to die down. It wasn't that he was tired, he was just realizing that the effort was useless. He'd tried the Killing Curse, but all that did was cause a large red gash. The Cruciatus didn't affect the wolf at all, and

trying the Imperius Curse on the monster proved to be useless as well since it easily threw off the curse. Harry stopped his barrage altogether and started on his next strategy. He figured that the others could find a way to subdue the summoner if he kept the Eidolon busy.

He surrounded himself with an aura of defensive magic, it was a combination of shielding charms, Protect spells and a few Shell spells as well. He then cast Haste on himself and charged at the wolf. The beast was incredibly fast and dodged all of Harry's sword strikes with seeming ease. The battle was far from one sided however, as the wolf was attacking with claw and tooth in an attempt to destroy the young wizard. Harry's defensive barrier took the brunt of the damages and he managed to dodge the others. Harry saw that this strategy still wasn't getting him anywhere, so he leapt backwards to rethink his plans.

Fenrir wasn't going to give him the chance to rethink things. The wolf ran right after him and their battle raged on. Fenrir started to use its control over the ground to its advantage. The terrain became less and less even and Harry struggled to dodge the claw swipes and bites from the animal. Soon the terrain was so uneven that he had to jump in order to move around. He blasted the beast with a Flare spell, singeing it slightly, but not causing too much damage otherwise. He knew he couldn't keep fighting like this much longer and he hoped that the others were doing better than he was.

As it turned out they weren't doing much better. Ethan and Andrea had recovered from the energy blast and were now helping Sophia and Sheyna deal with a rampaging Bastian Zombie. They didn't want to damage him too much because with the right spells the zombification could be reversed and Bastian would be fully alive again. Unfortunately a normal Esuna wouldn't get the job done and they were forced to fend him off the traditional way.

While the zombie attacked them, the summoner was bombarding them with all manner of harmful white magic. Blinding spells, magic sealing spells, bolts of white energy and even spells to slow them down or make them completely immobile. Currently Sheyna had her magic bound, Ethan was partially blinded, Andrea was under the effects of a Slow spell and Sophia's right arm was petrified. Despite

these conditions, the four of them continued to struggle against the rampaging Bastian and the last summoner.

Sophia used her stone arm to block a sword slash from the Zombie that used to be Bastian. Despite its decaying state, the zombie was still very fast and seemed to retain all of Bastian's skills with a sword. She was unable to use her crossbow effectively with one hand, so she chose to use magic. She blasted the zombie with a Fira spell and winced when she saw the damage it did to the zombie's chest.

While Sophia struggled with the zombie, Ethan fought through his impaired vision and once again tried to attack the summoner. He rushed forward and thrust his spear at the translucent barrier that surrounded the summoner. The spear met heavy resistance and as much as he tried, the effort was in vain. Sheyna was firing her machine gun at the barrier as well, but nothing was working.

Andrea was getting bombarded with magic bolt after magic bolt. She could tell that the summoner was only playing with them. And this fact only served to raise her ire even more. The Slow spell made it almost impossible for her to dodge or mount an offense, so she was forced to endure the pain as best she could while trying to find a way to improve her current situation. As another blast of white magic burned her skin she clenched her teeth against the pain and gripped her gunblade tightly. Another bolt slammed into her and this was all she could take.

Letting out a scream of rage and defiance she let herself fall into the overwhelming surge of power that came with a Limit Break. Blue energy crackled around her body and a golden-orange glow wavered around her. The slow spell was dissipated by the surging energy and in that moment the tide of the battle started to turn. Andrea leapt into the air, her aura exploding as she went, and drove her sword right into the summoner's barrier. The summoner was surprised at the show of strength, but quickly regained her composure and reinforced her barrier. Andrea backed off and for a moment before putting all her energy into one attack.

"Raging Nova!" She yelled as red energy radiated from her gunblade. She charged forward once again and drove the blade into the barrier,

but she didn't stop there, she moved like a whirlwind, going around the barrier and slashing it from several different angles. The summoner tried to slow her progress with energy bolts, but the SeeD moved too fast. The barrier began to crumble and with one final strike a sound like breaking glass echoed through the whole cavern as the barrier finally collapsed.

Andrea was almost spent from the use of such a strong Limit Break, but it didn't stop her from charging at the now vulnerable summoner. This proved to be a deadly mistake. The summoner's eyes blazed with white-hot fury as she thrust her hand out and uttered a spell. "Holy!" Blue energy surrounded Andrea, and unlike with Harry's Holy spell, this one acted completely different. The spell lifted the SeeD high into the air before a series of blue explosions bombarded the helpless warrior. Then the spell slammed her brutally into the ground and left her a burnt and broken heap.

Harry had watched all this out of the corner of his eye, still dealing with a rampaging canine with the ability to control the very ground he fought on. The event only served to fuel his anger at the summoner and her Eidolon. He wasn't sure if he could use any of his own Limit Breaks at the moment, but he had to try. Focusing on the energy that lay within him he channeled it into his blade causing the black gunblade to glow white. He then leapt away from Fenrir and let his energy flare around him. "Shining Chaos!" He bellowed as he slashed his sword in an arch causing a swathe of energy to wash over the cavern. The energy burned anything it touched, including Fenrir and the summoner. Somehow it didn't seem to affect any of his allies, including the now zombified version of Bastian. Harry flicked his gunblade and the energy returned to it. Then he rushed forward and began pummeling Fenrir with slash after slash, causing great damage to the mythical beast and with one final strike to the canine's head he had dispatched the earth elemental.

"Fenrir!" cried the summoner in alarm, then she turned to Harry with a look of pure rage on her face. "Now you die, Terra Homing!"

Blue and white energy arched around the summoner's outstretched hands and she raised them above her head. Then she brought both palms down onto the ground causing a blue and white circle to

surround the part of the ground she was standing on. Then there was an explosion of power and a great golden beast appeared. It was roughly humanoid, but it stood at nearly twenty feet tall and its face held a demonic look to it with a slightly pointed nose and gargantuan fangs in its mouth. Its eyes burned a deeper gold than its skin and on the sides of its head, above each ear, were two horns that looked like they belonged on a ram. The being was also very well muscled and looked like it could crush a man's skull without the slightest bit of effort.

The beast gathered blue energy in its hands, similar to that of the holy spell used on Andrea, and hurled it at Harry. The wizard reinforced his magical barrier, but the energy ball was far too strong for him to deflect. It surrounded him and he found himself in an area filled with the same blue energy. Beams of it began to slam into him, causing his magical barrier to sway. Soon the barrier was completely gone and Harry was bombarded with blast after blast, unable to move or defend himself in any way. Then the entire area within the ball exploded leaving Harry in much the same state as Andrea.

The others could do nothing but watch as the Eidolon nearly killed their friend. Harry's clothes were little more than charred scraps of fabric, his skin was so badly burned in places that it was black. He also sported several cuts all across his body, but instead of bleeding like they would normally, the wounds had cauterized thanks to the intense heat of the attack.

"It won't be long now." said the summoner "The pain will stop soon enough."

The summoner's distraction with Harry had given the remaining three warriors a chance to recover. After a few Esuna spells and a Curaga each they were all more or less ready to fight. Sophia let out an angry cry as she fired a crossbow bolt charged with fire energy. The bolt caught the summoner off guard and struck her right in the back. She hissed in pain as she grabbed the offending projectile and pulled it out of her back. A large red mark was left behind, partially cauterized from the fire.

“You just made a big mistake.” said the summoner before healing herself with a Cura spell “I was going to make your deaths quick, but now I’ll let you suffer. Madeen, make them bleed.”

The large beast roared as it ran toward the three warriors. It made a fist which it charged with its blue energy. The group scattered as the fist came smashing down where they had once stood. The Bastian zombie wasn’t so lucky, it had been dormant since the summoner had stopped focusing on it, and it took the brunt of the beast’s attack. The zombie was almost completely crushed, but thanks to its undead properties it automatically began to heal, but for the moment it was taken out of the fight.

Sheyna blasted Madeen with blue fireball after blue fireball, but nothing seemed to slow the beast down as it charged at the three warriors again. It reached out its huge hand. and grabbed Ethan. The SeeD struggled to free itself from the monster’s grip, stabbing his spear into its hand and casting spells at its face, but again his effort was in vain. The beast threw him into the air and then slapped him with its other hand sending him hurtling into the ground with astounding force. Any normal person would have been dead from the impact, but thanks to Ethan’s resilience as a SeeD he only suffered two dislocated shoulders, a few broken ribs, a fractured neck and several cuts and bruises on his face, chest and arms.

The beast then turned its attention to the two remaining females. It thrust its fist downward, causing a shockwave to ripple through the ground. Sheyna and Sophia were knocked off balance by the force of the attack. Before they could regain their footing, both of them were levitated into the air by the summoner who had cast a Float spell on them.

“Just so you know, this will hurt quite a bit.” she said in warning “Madeen, Tornado!”

The beast roared as it summoned a gigantic whirlwind in front of it. the maelstrom slowly grew larger and larger, until it was touching the cavern ceiling and sucking in all manner of rocks and debris. Sheyna cast a barrier around herself, and Sophia did the same, the tornado drew them both in quickly since they had no means to brace

themselves thanks to the float spell. As they were spun around inside the deadly cyclone, rocks slammed against their barriers and the g-forces inside the whirlwind caused their limbs to bend at odd angles.

By the time the spell ended, Sheyna had broken both her arms and had a dislocated hip, she also sported several deep gashes all over her body. Sophia wasn't much better, she had broken both her legs, had an obvious concussion and one of her shoulders was dislocated as well. The beast roared in triumph as it looked around the cavern surveying its damage.

"Time to end this Madeen." said the summoner "Finish them all with Terra Homing."

Harry heard the command and desperately tried to regain his footing. He was physically exhausted, but his magic wasn't completely gone yet. He focused on casting the strongest healing spell he could muster and cast it on himself. His burns healed substantially and his broken bones mended. He shakily stood to his feet and quickly summoned his gunblade. Thinking quickly he waved his right hand and summoned the all but forgotten junction stones of his and his allies. He focused on the five stones and decided it was best to junction them all. He expected to feel the invading presence of the guardians, but all he felt was a slight shifting within his mind. He then realized the GF were, for all intents and purposes, dead at the moment.

He did have a few G-Returners in his banished trunk, but using those would most likely alert the summoner to the presence of more GF and make the battle even more difficult. So instead of awakening the fallen guardians, he settled for using the various spells that were now available to him with them junctioned once more. He cast an Aura spell on himself and felt his energy skyrocket. Madeen was just preparing to release its attack when Harry acted. His blade glowed with black energy as he jumped high into the air, heading straight for the ball of blue energy between Madeen's raised hands.

He brought his blade down right between the ball of blue energy, slicing it in half. He continued downward causing a long gash to form from the top of Madeen's head, down its back and finally across its

right hip. He then turned to face the Eidelon, his blade still burning with dark energy, and shouted "Oblivion's Avatar!" before ruthlessly slashing the monster over and over again with dark energy. After several attacks, Harry leapt backwards to assess his damage. Madeen now sported long cuts all over its body, they bled a thick black substance that Harry assumed was the Eidelon's blood. Madeen staggered on its feet for a moment before falling to the ground, making it shake and forming a large crater.

"Get up!" yelled the summoner angrily "Finish them all, Terra Homing!"

To Harry's horror, the damaged Eidelon picked itself up out of the crater and began to gather blue energy in its hands once more. Harry was still under the effects of the Aura spell and began to charge another Limit Break. Then a decaying hand grabbed his gunblade and wrenched it away from him. Harry looked at his attacker and saw the rotting face that was formally Bastian's. Harry kicked the zombie away, but the thing still had his gunblade. Madeen was about to release its attack and Harry could only think of one thing to do.

He gripped the black materia around his neck and began to focus on the magic within. He felt the two spells, one yielding massive destructive force, the other wielding a magic so dark that it made Harry wince. He focused on the latter, knowing that this was just the kind of power he needed. The air began to turn crimson all around the cavern and black and dark violet energy began to form in Harry's hands. Dark blue lightning crackled around him as he began to harness the dark power of the spell. Madeen had finished gathering its energy and threw the enormous ball of blue energy just as Harry started to cast his spell.

With a cry of "Doomsday!" Harry released the spell. Black and violet energy poured over everything in the cavern including Harry and his allies. The wizard screamed in pain as the spell began to tear him apart, but he held on, pouring more power into it. Madeen's energy collided with the Doomsday spell and a crashing sound filled the cavern as the two opposing forces collided. The black energy began to overtake the blue, but then Madeen let out a roar of rage and the blue energy began to overpower the black energy.

“Just give up!” yelled the summoner “Even if you manage to destroy Madeen, I’ve still got another Eidelon.”

“You’re bluffing!” yelled Harry as he poured everything he had into the spell. The dark energy was burning his skin even more and it felt like something was trying to rip him apart, atom by atom. The black energy began to overwhelm the blue energy and soon both Madeen and its summoner were engulfed in the dark spell. Everyone who was conscious screamed in the cavern as the Doomsday spell tore into them.

As the energy dissipated, Harry could barely stand. He looked around and saw that the spell had only burned his friends, although he couldn’t really tell with Andrea as she was already in pretty bad shape. Madeen on the other hand, had been reduced to a formless glob of charred gold. The summoner was also burned a great deal by the spell, but she too remained standing.

“I must say that I didn’t think you’d beat Madeen.” said the summoner. “You fought a good fight, but it ends here, Rebirth Flame!”

Harry watched in shock as orange and golden flames appeared in front of the summoner. Two large wings burst from the ball of flame, each stretching about twenty-five feet. A trilling could be heard and Harry recognized it as that of a phoenix. He was proved correct when the majestic head of the bird emerged from the flaming ball. With one thrust of its massive wings, the large phoenix completely formed and dissipated the flaming ball. The bird was a golden-orange color with rainbow streaks at the tips of its wings. It had a golden breast and its wingspan was nearly sixty feet and it stood at about fifteen feet tall.

The phoenix thrust its wings forward and a torrent of fire came streaming toward Harry, he quickly conjured a shield, but the heat of the flames still burned him. At the same time red sparks began to descend on the fallen forms of Fenrir, Madeen and the still zombified Bastian. The wolf’s body was mended and it slowly rose to its feet. Madeen’s body was reformed and it too rose shakily to its feet. Thankfully Madeen wasn’t completely healed, as it still looked as it had after Harry’s first attack on it. The most surprising thing however

was the affect the Rebirth Flame had on the zombie. Its skin returned to its normal tanned color and its hair regained its golden look. The sloppily healed wounds were completely mended and soon Bastian was restored to his former self.

“What the hell?” he asked as he looked around confused.

“Give me my gunblade, now!” yelled Harry to his newly restored comrade.

“Catch.” said Bastian, throwing him the gunblade.

Harry caught it and wasted no time in charging at the newly awakened Fenrir. The wolf barely had time to register the incoming attack as Harry ruthlessly slashed it as he had the first time. He couldn't maintain the assault long though because the other two Eidelons joined the fray. Madeen struck him with a fist charged with Holy energy and Phoenix bombarded him with its fireballs. Harry was maintaining a magical barrier, but his magic was almost completely spent. He needed help and he needed it now.

While Harry dealt with the Eidelons, Bastian ran over to Andrea. He gently lifted her head and poured an Elixir down her throat. She was the worst off and he only had two of the valuable potions on him. After he'd done that he ran over to Ethan and did the same. The two SeeDs slowly regained their footing and rushed to Harry's aid. Bastian then went over to Sheyna and Sophia and cast two successive Curaga spells on each of them. Once the girls were healed the three of them rejoined the battle against the Eidelons.

Harry was getting pummeled by Madeen and Fenrir when Andrea leapt into the battle, she drove her gunblade into the earth elementals flank, causing it to roar in pain and turn its attention towards her. Ethan jabbed his spear into Madeen's exposed leg and the beast relented on its assault on Harry and turned its attention to the SeeD. Sheyna fired a continuous stream of plasma shots from her machine gun at Fenrir, while Sophia bombarded Phoenix with Blizzaga spells.

The distraction of the Eidelons gave Bastian a clear shot at the summoner. She was so focused on controlling the three of them and

so sure that they would keep her six opponents busy, that she had left herself completely exposed. Bastian noticed the energy radiating from the small horn on her head, and knew what he needed to do. He charged toward her, swinging his sword in an arch and slammed its edge precisely at the base of her horn. The small protrusion was neatly removed from her forehead, the only remainder being a medium sized red mark that was bleeding profusely.

The summoner cried out in pain as she clapped both hands over the wound in her head. Her magic began to fluctuate violently and suddenly all three Eidelons disappeared without a trace. The summoner began to scream horribly as her magic began to turn against her, burning her slowly from the inside out. The six warriors watched in awe as a white glow surrounded the summoner and then she too disappeared. The cavern became deafly quiet as the six warriors collapsed to the ground in exhaustion.

“That,” said Harry “Was something I don’t want to do everyday.”

“So what now?” asked Andrea “We came all this way, fought this summoner, have you found any answers yet?”

“No.” said Harry bitterly “This was probably just a sick joke by Grindlewald, he’d think it was funny to send me into a death trap.”

“There’s still more caverns down here.” said Sophia “There might be something worth checking out.”

“That or another homicidal summoner.” said Bastian “Speaking of summoning, give me back my junction stone, Harry.”

“Oh, yeah.” said Harry sheepishly. He walked over to his four awaiting friends and transferred each of their junctions back to them in turn. “I suppose its safe to use some G-Returners now.” He summoned his trunk from where he’d banished it and removed five vials with blue liquid in them. He tossed one to each of the others and uncorked his own. “Bottoms up.” he said before chugging his down.

He felt the effects immediately as Seth’s presence reawakened inside his mind.

“That was a lucky shot.” said the guardian in an annoyed voice.

“Maybe so, but I still won.” said Harry “The scythe thing was a cheap shot and you know it.”

“I don’t do ‘fair’.” said Seth “I fight to win.”

“I suppose I’ll need to find a new summon Materia.” said Sheyna, interrupting Harry’s argument with Seth.

“I’m sure you’ll be able to find one.” said Harry “Maybe we’ll run across a junction stone that suits you.”

“Maybe.” said Sheyna

The group walked through the cavern until they found themselves in a place that was swarming with Pyreflies. The small balls of light were swarming around each other, forming a large pillar. When the six warriors entered the room, the Pyreflies all stopped in mid air and then flew straight at the six of them. No one had a chance to react as the Pyreflies slammed into them full force. It didn’t hurt, but instead produced a tingling sensation over their entire bodies. As quickly as it had started it ended, and the Pyreflies began to swarm once more after passing through each of them.

“What was that?” wondered Harry aloud.

“I’m not sure.” said Andrea “It feels like something’s different though.”

“I don’t think it was bad.” said Sophia “Whatever ‘it’ was.”

“We should head back up now.” said Sheyna “There’s nothing else here.”

“You’re probably right.” said Ethan “I for one am sick of this place.”

“I’ll second that.” said Bastian “I don’t want to be turned into a zombie again.”

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"You failed." said Zidane calmly, but it was clear by the look in his eyes that he was very angry. "You failed and now all six of them gained the ability to go into Trance. Do you know what kind of trouble it could cause if they learn to use that power?"

"I tried Zidane." said the summoner forlornly

"Trying isn't enough Eiko!" yelled Zidane "I asked you to one simple thing and you fail, just like you did that day in Limblum."

"This is completely different." said Eiko getting angry "I was helpless then."

"And you're helpless now." said Zidane "They removed your horn, the thing that let you focus your magic, you're worthless to me without it."

"But Dagger used to..." started Eiko

"Don't you dare!" yelled Zidane, letting his fury loose. "Don't mention her name in my presence. You have a point though, she did use her powers without her horn, but that was because she lost it early in life, your magical channels have already settled, you could rearrange them, but it won't ever be the same."

"So what are you going to do with me?" asked Eiko coldly

"Give you the thing you don't want the most." said Zidane "The chance to live again."

"NO!" yelled Eiko "Just let me die, I don't want to go through it all again. It hurts too much."

"It's not about what you want." said Zidane "You failed, and I don't tolerate failure. You never really died to begin with, so you'll just start from where you left off. Although I can't restore your horn, so you'll have to make due without it."

“Why?” asked Eiko “You’re supposed to be my friend, why do you want me to suffer so much?”

“I told you a long time ago that the Zidane you knew was gone.” said Zidane coldly “You chose to cling to the foolish hope that he was buried within me somewhere, now you’ll suffer the consequences of that false hope.”

A white glow surrounded Eiko and she disappeared from the Crystal Citadel. Zidane sighed as he focused on his metal link to Kuja.

“We’ve got a problem Kuja.” said Zidane

“Oh really?” said Kuja “After our last ‘chat’ I was under the impression that things were going smoothly on your end.”

“Well with you scheming to try and undermine me and the boy heading right into my trap at the lafa Tree, things were going as expected.”

“You seem to be very well informed.” said Kuja tonelessly “If things were going how you expected them to, what happened?”

“They won.” said Zidane. “But you probably already knew that thanks to your little puppet.”

“You are well informed.” said Kuja in mock admiration. “The brat has gotten very strong since you all fought me, still though Potter managed to pull off another lucky miracle.”

“He’s beginning to rely less on luck and more on his own abilities.” said Zidane “You know what happened a little while ago?”

“You mean about them acquiring the power of Trance?” asked the mage rhetorically. “Yes I know about that. I suppose you want me to clean up your mess?”

“That’s why your there.” said Zidane “And go ahead with your little plan, it won’t work, but it’ll be fun to watch you fail again.”

“We’ll see.” said Kuja darkly “Leave Potter and his friends to me, and be prepared to face me in combat again. I’ll prove once and for all that I’m better than you are.”

“We’ll see Kuja.” said Zidane, echoing his brother “We’ll see.”

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The group made it back to the chamber where the elevator had taken them down. They looked around, but couldn’t find whatever mechanism triggered the elevator.

“Don’t tell me we’re stuck down here.” said Bastian irritably

“Looks that way.” said Harry calmly “There’s got to be a way up though.”

“There was another passageway a while back.” said Sheyna “There might be a way up through there.”

“We’ve got nothing else better to do.” said Ethan “Let’s go.”

They followed Sheyna toward the passageway and once there they found a staircase spiraling upward.

“This looks like the way up.” said Sophia “Too bad you didn’t find what you were looking for here Harry.”

“Yeah.” said the wizard “We could have been working on a way to free Spira in all the time it took us to get here.”

“Don’t worry about it man.” said Bastian “We’ve killed loads of fiends and gotten a lot stronger since starting out. It’ll be a lot easier to fight all those Dark Knights and soldiers that Baron’s got, not to mention Strife and all their techno-soldiers.”

“I guess you’re right.” said Harry

The others began walking up the staircase, but Harry lagged behind, something was telling him that he needed to stay down here a while longer. He was going to simply shrug it off and keep heading up when something surprising, yet not completely unexpected happened. The stairs lead up through a narrow opening further up, once everyone but Harry was through, Sheyna blasted the opening, sealing it shut and trapping Harry at the bottom of the tree.

The wizard stared in surprise at the now sealed opening, he'd known that Sheyna wasn't completely herself, but he'd hoped that he'd have a chance to get to the bottom of it before something like what just happened, happened.

"Well, you did want to stay down here." said Seth

"Yeah, but not like this." said Harry in an annoyed tone. "I hope the others saw what she did, if not, things could get bad for them really fast."

"Why don't you just apparate out?" suggested the guardian.

"I can try." said Harry

He focused on pushing himself to the outside of the tree, making sure to focus all of his magic to that one point. He began to feel the tell-tale sensation of being forced through a tube, but then he felt as though he slammed into a brick wall. He opened his eyes and found himself back at the bottom of the tree, it seemed that the lafa Tree had natural disapparation wards.

"Bloody hell, my head." He moaned as he grabbed his throbbing head in both hands.

He shook off the disorientation and looked around. He was near the chamber where they'd fought the summoner. Having nothing better to do, he decided to look around that room a little more. When he got there, he was surprised to see the summoner reappear in the same white light that she'd disappeared in earlier. He immediately drew his gunblade and prepared to fight again.

“Go ahead.” said the summoner “Not like I can do anything about it anyway.”

“This some kind of trick?” asked Harry “Lure me into a false sense of security so you can take advantage of me?”

“You make it sound like I’m trying to molest you or something.” said Eiko “Don’t flatter yourself.”

Harry chose to ignore the insinuation and get straight to the point. “I thought we killed you.”

“No, your friend just chopped off my horn.” said Eiko

“So why’d you disappear then?” asked Harry “I thought you were some kind of spirit.”

“Spirit?” she asked incredulously “I’m no spirit, before I was only half alive.”

“And now?” asked Harry

“I get the ‘pleasure’ of living again.” said Eiko bitterly

“You don’t sound too thrilled.” said Harry

“Why do you care?” asked Eiko “A little while ago I was trying to kill you.”

“But you didn’t.” said Harry “And now you can’t even fight me properly, I’m stuck down here with nothing better to do, so I’m asking questions.”

“Fine.” said Eiko “Ask away.”

“What’s your name?” asked Harry

“Eiko Carol.” said Eiko

“Harry Potter.” said Harry in response.

"A pleasure." said Eiko sarcastically.

"Why were you down here?" asked Harry curiously. "And what made you want to kill us anyway?"

"That's a long story." said Eiko

"I've got nothing but time." said Harry

"Well," said Eiko "I know Mikoto told you about Kuja and Zidane. I was one of Zidane's friends. He and the others found me in the ruins of Maiden Sari, that's the capital city of summoners, I was only six at the time, but I knew how to use most of my abilities. I traveled with them and ended up seeing things no child should ever see. I was with them when they battled Kuja and I was there when we looked Death right in his ugly blue face."

"Blue?" asked Harry "I always pictured a guy in a black cloak with a skeleton for a body carrying a scythe."

"Nope." said Eiko "He was really big, blue and had a face that looked like a skull. There was this big ring sticking out of his back too."

"So you all fought him?" asked Harry

"Yeah." said Eiko "Kuja had been trying to destroy everything using the power of The Crystal, when he realized he was going to lose, he decided that everyone needed to die with him, so he cast Ultima right in front of The Crystal. That sent us into the void between life and death, we were all ready to die, all of us but Zidane that is, he stood up to Necron, that's what he called himself, and we all stood with him. The battle nearly killed us all, but somehow we won."

"What then?" asked Harry, wanting her to continue

"We reappeared outside this very tree. Then Zidane started acting kind of weird. He said for us to leave and that he had to go back for something, we all knew it was Kuja."

“Why would he go back for Kuja?” said Harry incredulously “The guys a bastard.”

“We all thought so too.” said Eiko “But that’s the kind of guy Zidane was, he was always willing to give people second chances.”

“Sounds like Dumbledore.” said Harry “What happened to him after that?”

“I’m not sure.” said Eiko “We left and a couple of years past. The monarch of Limblum, Regent Cid, and his wife Hilda took me in as their daughter. I never thought I’d have a family again and soon I accepted them as my new parents. Then one day we all went to Alexandria for a festival in celebration for Kuja’s defeat. There was a play, and during the show one of the actors came out in a hooded cloak. He did this whole dramatic speech and then threw off his cloak. It turned out that it was Zidane.”

“Sounds like he enjoyed making an entrance.” said Harry

This comment brought a genuine smile to Eiko’s face. “Yes he did.” she said, but then her expression darkened. “After Zidane returned he ended up marrying the queen of Alexandria, Garnet til’ Alexandros XXXII, or as we called her Dagger.”

“Wait, the queen of Alexandria married Zidane?” asked Harry confused

“She had been traveling with Zidane since the beginning, from what I was told Zidane’s group kidnapped her under the orders of Regent Cid, but things got complicated after that.”

“I see...” said Harry, still not quite getting it.

“She was a summoner like me, except she’d lost her horn a long time ago.” continued Eiko “I looked up to her like an older sister during our journey, but after she took on the role of queen, we drifted apart. Then after she married Zidane it was even worse. Things in Alexandria were going well, but things in Limblum weren’t. During the war with Kuja, the former queen of Alexandria attacked Limblum with

an Eidelon that she'd taken from Dagger. Once the people of Limblum found out I was a summoner they started to fear me. It didn't matter to them that I'd helped save them all from total annihilation, or that I myself didn't have anything to do with it. A few of the people higher in the government wanted to seal my Eidelons."

"Dad wouldn't allow it though, he said as long as he was Regent and he trusted me that that was all that mattered. Mom agreed with him and this began to start a conflict within Limblum. I couldn't leave the castle for fear of being attacked, and there were a few times while I was inside the castle that someone tried to off me. This continued for almost ten years, the tension built up to a critical state, and then something terrible happened."

"Dad had decided to address the entire city, so he headed to the middle of the business district and began to condemn all the attacks against me and the royal family in general, then he said that he'd chosen me as his successor and that he trusted me to lead the city with the same wisdom he had for the past forty years."

"Let me guess." said Harry "The people really didn't like that."

"No, they didn't." said Eiko "Someone cast a Flare spell on dad and some others put silencing spells on me and mom. Then a group of them came up on stage with swords in hand. They didn't even hesitate when they decapitated mother and father, then they turned on me. They didn't out and out kill me like they did my parents. They wanted me to suffer like they had when the Eidelon nearly destroyed the city. I was so scared and so angry. I wanted them to pay for what they did, but at the same time I just wanted to get away. I couldn't cast any spells because the Silence spell that was cast on me kept me from calling forth my Eidelons or using any of my magic."

"How'd you survive then?" asked Harry

"It just so happened that one of my friends had been in the crowd." said Eiko "When people saw the Flaming Armarant jump on stage and grab me, they were sure he was going to finish me off. Most people didn't know that Armarant had helped save the world just like

we did, so it was a shock to them when he picked me up and got me out of the city.”

“He took me to Alexandria, and that’s when I found out that Zidane had disappeared. I wasn’t in any position to go look for him with the others, so I stayed in Alexandria. Dagger stayed too, being queen meant that she couldn’t go trekking across the planet, even to find her husband.”

“While the others were gone, a new government quickly arose in Limblum, they threatened Alexandria that if they didn’t hand me over, they’d attack the city and get me themselves. Dagger told them that if they even so much as came near Alexandria she’d raise Limblum to the ground, and she mean tit too. Cid had been her Godfather and she was almost as angry as I was about his death.”

“I couldn’t take it anymore, I didn’t want to live with all the strife and chaos going on around me. I decided then and there that I was going to end it. I summoned Madeen and ordered her to use Terra Homing on me. I ordered her over and over again, but she wouldn’t do it. So I dismissed her and went to the highest point of the castle. Then I jumped.”

“You jumped off a three hundred foot tower.” said Harry thoughtfully, “Sounds painful.”

“I never hit the ground.” said Eiko “The same white light that brought me back here surrounded me then. When I opened my eyes I was standing in front of Zidane. He said that if I was tired of living he had a better use for me.”

“Guard the Iafa Tree.” said Harry

“You guessed it.” said Eiko “In exchange for doing that, I got to exist without aging and go into a coma-like sleep, I didn’t mind, it’s what I wanted. I stayed like that until someone came down here and disturbed me.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Since before the first merger.” said Eiko

“That long!” said Harry “That’s nearly 8,000 years!”

“Don’t sound so surprised.” said Eiko “Mikoto’s been alive for that long, and you saw the statue in Alexandria.”

“How do you know all this?” asked Harry “Did you learn it all from the GF?”

“Yes.” said Eiko “When I called them to me, I knew everything that they learned from you, and some of their own thoughts. Here’s a question for you, why are you back down here?”

“I got stuck.” said Harry “One of my friends hasn’t been herself lately. She blasted the exit shut before I could get out.”

“The Lunarian?” asked Eiko “She had Kuja’s aura around her, he’s probably manipulating her.”

“I figured as much.” said Harry “I didn’t do anything because I didn’t want him to know that I knew, if he thought I did, he’d use her as some kind of bait for me...and...oh shit.”

“What?” said Eiko confused

“Kuja,” said Harry, “He’ll realize that I suspect something now, I don’t think he feels I’m stupid enough to believe Sheyna really did betray me, he’s setting some kind of trap for me using her and my friends, I know he is.”

“Sounds like something he would do.” said Eiko. “Once he used me and some of the others as hostages to make Zidane get a stone for him.”

“That’s what he’s after.” said Harry grabbing the sorceress’s crystal around his neck. “He wants to use this somehow.”

“That’s sorceress power in there.” said Eiko

“So you know all about me, how do you know what’s been going on in the world?” asked Harry

“You aren’t the first to come down here.” said Eiko “You’re just the first to leave in one piece.”

“Oh...” said Harry “Speaking of leaving, do you know a way out of here?”

“If the stairs aren’t an option, no.” said Eiko

“Well then, I’ll have to make a way.” said Harry confidently

“Go ahead, I won’t stop you.” said the summoner.

“What about you?” said Harry “If Zidane’s stupid enough to cast you off for failing one job, he’s a moron.”

“I’m useless without my magic.” said Eiko “When your friend cut off my horn, he effectively neutralized me.”

“Hmm.” said Harry deep in thought. “Based on what I can tell you’ve still got all your magic, the horn was just a way to focus it right?”

“Basically.” said Eiko

“There’s always another way to use magic.” said Harry “Let’s see.” he reached out with his Legilimancy to see if she’d been honest with him.

Her most recent memories were of her conversation with Zidane, and Harry got an immediate feeling of dislike towards the genome from just that memory. He seemed so bitter and angry about something, but Harry couldn’t figure out what. He probed deeper into her mind and found the answer. Zidane didn’t want to be Death. He was forced into the roll because of his defeat of Necron, he wanted to make those responsible pay for what they put him through, and he didn’t care what he had to do to get it.

“You seem on the level.” said Harry “I’ll make you a deal, come with me out of here and help me fight Kuja, you’ve fought him before and

you seem to know Zidane pretty well too. Do this and I'll do everything I can to help you regain your magic."

"Tempting." said Eiko "I could stick it to Kuja again and maybe find a way to get through to Zidane. I don't really think you can help me with the magic issue, but it's not like I have anything else to do, or any other options."

"It's settled then." said Harry "Now I need to find a way out of here..."

As if to answer his plea for an exit, the entire cavern began to tremble violently, Harry immediately looked at Eiko, but the summoner was just as surprised as he was. He looked down and found that a crack had formed right below him. Through it he could see the green glow of the Lifestream flowing underneath the tree. Pyreflies began swarming the air, and with one great cracking sound the entire cavern floor split open revealing a flowing green substance below. Harry had nothing to stop himself from falling in and he and Eiko fell into the swirling greenish-white abyss.

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A/N: I decided to give you all the chapter a little bit earlier, I hope you appreciate it, I won't guarantee an update by the weekend, but I might pull something together. Please don't be afraid of the review button, and if you have any questions that you want immediate answers to, don't be afraid to IM me at Doom18769. I don't mind talking to people, so message me whenever.

Current of Lives

The day started just like any 'normal' day at the compound. She was up at the ungodly hour of four-thirty a.m. and began the rigorous ten mile jog around the magically expanded training area. Then she would go to the mess hall and eat a quick breakfast before heading to her weapons training.

In the last few months her skill had improved with the dual short swords and her use of a firearm had improved a great deal as well. She preferred the magnum as it was powerful, yet not too big. Her magical channeling abilities had improved as well, but they were nowhere near where she or Nicolas wanted them to be. The problem was that she could not fight the pull of her core on the outside magic. It wanted to devour it all and leave no trace behind. She needed to control this effect so that she could refashion the magic into what she wanted it to be. So far all she had managed to do was channel about a third of whatever energy she absorbed.

Atrum helped her some on this front. The strange black phoenix usually just sat in her room, but from time to time he would flame into her channeling lessons and encourage her to try and absorb more of his spells each time he was present. Many times the phoenix would bombard her with spells of incredible magnitude and power, like one that seemed to be a super concentrated fireball, or another that was best described as mega-lightning. Atrum however called them Firaga and Thundaga, whatever that meant.

It was while she was on the targeting range with her pistol that things began to go strange. She felt a tingling all over her body that vaguely reminded her of the visions she would sometimes get from Tom, but unlike those it was not painful, just... there. Then things got even stranger when she heard the voices.

"Where'd all the green go?" wondered a male voice

"I'm still trying to process what happened." said another male's voice, but this one seemed kind of familiar.

"We fell into the Lifestream." said an unfamiliar female's voice.

Ginny focused on her targets and shot them dead center with practiced skill. Meanwhile she tried to focus her Occlumency to block out the voices. It didn't do any good though, as she still heard them a few moments later.

"So where exactly are we Eiko?" asked the familiar male again.

"Looks to me like we're experiencing someone else's life." said the female, now known to her as Eiko.

"Seth?" asked the voice she recognized again, for the life of her she couldn't figure out whom the voice belonged to. She looked around to see if anyone had noticed her distracted look, and paled slightly when she saw Nicolas and her weapons instructor walking over to her.

"I have no idea," said the first voice, Seth as she knew him now, "I wonder whose' vision this is, doesn't seem like Kuja's."

"I don't think its Tom's either," said the familiar voice again, now she was even more confused, Tom? He couldn't be referring to the same Tom that was Lord Voldemort, could he? Again, she felt like she was missing something obvious, but before she could contemplate on it any further, Flamel and her instructor had reached her position and began to address her.

"Excellent work rookie." said her instructor, using the nickname he gave to all new trainees.

"Thank you sir." said Ginny with the respect she had learned to show for those higher in command than her.

"You've come a long way since your phoenix brought you to me," said Flamel.

"Hey, I've seen that guy before," said the familiar voice suddenly.

"Really, where?" asked Seth.

"Can't quite remember," said the first voice.

“Just be quiet,” said Eiko, “For all you know she could hear us.”

“She?” asked the strange voice, “How can you tell?”

“Don’t they teach basic biology to you in school?” asked Seth sarcastically.

“That’s not what I meant, and you know it,” said the stranger again.

“Thank you Uncle Nicolas,” said Ginny.

“Uncle Nicolas?” said the stranger thoughtfully, “I wish Hermione were here, she’d be able to figure out, hell even Ron would be some help.”

“How does he know Hermione and Ron?” wondered Ginny mentally.

“They were my best friends,” replied the voice, almost voluntarily; it sounded almost like he was answering his own question.

Ginny wanted to see if she could communicate with the voices more, but now was not the time to be zoning out. Flamel continued speaking and Ginny was forced to tune in mid speech.

“...Been going well, so I think it’s time we get you some practical experience, the war won’t fight itself.”

“Whatever you have planned I’m sure I’m ready.” said Ginny confidently.

“That’s the type of confidence I like to see,” said Nicolas, “I’m sure you and your new partner will work well together.”

“Partner?” asked Ginny confused; no one had said anything about a partner.

“Must like to work alone, I can respect that,” said Seth

"We're going to meet him now," said her instructor. "Arrogant little prick, came in here thinking himself a pretty capable wizard, he's been since knocked down a few pegs, but he's still a cocky little shit."

"Sounds like someone I know," she thought bitterly, thinking of Draco Malfoy, or even her own brother, Percy.

As if echoing her thoughts the strange voice said, "Sounds like ferret boy, or worse yet, my father. Although, I hate to put dad in the same category as the ferret."

"You should add him to your list of people to hurt when you see them," suggested Seth

"I might actually take you up on that one," said the stranger.

"This should be good." said Eiko.

"What?" asked the two males in unison.

"If you can't figure it out on your own, I'm not going to tell you," said Eiko.

During their conversation, Ginny was led through a series of hallways and into a room with a long table and several seats. She was shown a seat at one end of the rectangular table and Nicolas and her instructor took their seats. Suddenly, their faces became obscured by a black hood, the knowledge of them also seemed to fade into the back of her mind, she knew who they were, yet she couldn't recall any details about them suddenly, like a switch had been flipped, sealing all the information away.

"Those guys look like Unspeakables," said the stranger

"Something you recognize Harry?" asked Seth.

"Whose mind is this?" wondered Harry.

Ginny was surprised to say the least, she knew exactly who it was inside her mind now, but she was still unsure as to how he had gotten

there, or what he was doing. She could not focus on Harry now though, she needed concentrate on the black robed figures that had poured into the room and taken seats around the table. All that remained was one empty seat, directly opposite her.

The door opened once more and two more black robed figures escorted a tall young man with platinum-blond hair. The man had blue-grey eyes and stood about six-feet tall. Something about the man was familiar, but as was happening a lot lately, Ginny could not tell; Harry, however, did.

"What the hell!" he yelled mentally, causing Ginny to suppress a wince.

"What?" asked Eiko, "You know him?"

"Malfoy," said Harry venomously.

Ginny looked at the man again and almost recoiled in shock, anger and disgust. The image was clear now; the man looked almost exactly like Lucius Malfoy, only a lot more muscled and lacking the superiority that his father usually radiated. He had a smirk on his face that showed he was still quite arrogant, but he was different somehow, and Ginny could not put her finger on it.

"Now that we are all here," said the Unspeakable closest to her on the right, "You two are about to be inducted into an organization that works to defend against the forces of disruption. You will notice that I do not like using the terms 'evil' or 'dark' and I have a reason for this. Evil is in the eyes of the beholder, what you consider good and just may not carry over to others. Darkness on the other hand is very real, but not evil in any way. There are many beings, and some sit in this very room, that have delved very deeply into the dark arts. That is why we do not fight against the dark." "What we do," continued the next unspeakable to her right, "Is stop those that seek to disrupt the order that makes the world run at optimum efficiency. Should that be a being as dreadful as Voldemort, or someone who benignly manipulates things, like Dumbledore, we work against them."

"There are many of us," continued the next one in line. "We have networks all over the world. Our members are both Muggle and Magical, as I'm sure you've seen. That's why you both are here, we like to partner one magical person with one non-magical person."

"Before you make an outburst," said the next Unspeakable, turning to Ginny, "Your unique situation puts you in the category as non-magical, for all intents and purposes you are now a squib."

Malfoy snorted and the Unspeakables all fixed their gazes on him. The little color in his face immediately drained away when he met their gazes.

"Do not think lightly of your new partner," said the next Unspeakable "While she can't use magic in the traditional way, she has acquired abilities that make up for it. You will be the primary magical part of the team. Spells, wards, potions, wizard relations; these are all your responsibilities."

...

"You on the other hand," said the Unspeakable turning back to the strange woman whose mind Harry inhabited, "Will be the muggle aspect of the team. This includes using technology to its fullest and any other things that don't fall under your partner's duties."

"The duties themselves aren't exclusive," said the next Unspeakable. "There will be times when you may need to work with each other on either magical or non-magical situations; we leave this to your judgment."

"Now," said the next speaker, "You will take the unbreakable vow. This will eliminate any chances of you betraying us or each other."

Harry could feel the person want to protest this, but she kept her mouth shut for fear of being punished by these people. It was odd how Harry felt like he should know this person, yet he had been given no clues as to who they were by their random thoughts. If only they would pass a mirror or say their name.

“Now, repeat after me,” said the closest Unspeakable closest to the left, “I (then say your name) solemnly swear on my life and my magic that I will uphold the standard of all fellow Unspeakables, to stand against the forces of disruption and chaos and maintain the divine order that best stipulates peace and prosperity, or a suitable compromise of the two. I will never do anything to willingly harm my partner or the organization I now swear myself to. I will lay down my life if that is the cost to maintain this vow, so I swear it, so it shall be.”

The person took a deep breath and stood up, “I, Ginevra Molly Weasley, solemnly swear on my life and my magic that I will uphold the standard of all fellow Unspeakables, to stand against the forces of disruption and chaos and maintain the divine order that best stipulates peace and prosperity, or a suitable compromise of the two. I will never do anything to willingly harm my partner or the organization I now swear myself to. I will lay down my life if that is the cost to maintain this vow, so I swear it, so it shall be.”

That had thrown Harry for a loop. Here he was inside the mind of a person he assumed was dead. The only thing he knew of that would cancel the life debt she owed him was if she were dead or had repaid it, but since he knew she couldn't have repaid it, when he saw that the symbolic candle of it in his mind had been extinguished, he had thought the worst. Now though, it made sense. She had somehow lost her magic and thereby was canceled from the magical portion of the debt. It could still be repaid, but now magic was no longer a factor in the matter. He wondered how this unbreakable vow would work since she had no magic.

Apparently the Unspeakables had a remedy for that. They made Ginny slit her palm with a ritual dagger, she seemed uneasy about this, and when she looked down at her hand, Harry saw harsh red lines marring the otherwise smooth skin. He guessed this had something to do with her hesitation. He felt her muster her resolve and take the knife, gently running it across her palm. The blood dribbled into a goblet encrusted with runes and then it was passed to Malfoy.

Harry was still enraged when he saw the young Malfoy heir. He did not understand why he was there, what Ginny was doing near him

and what in the name of Merlin they were both doing in a room full of Unspeakables.

Malfoy took the cup and recited the same vow that Ginny had, he then took the dagger and put his blood in it as well. One of the Unspeakables added some kind of herb and waved his wand over the goblet, filling it with water. He set the whole mixture on fire. When the fire died away, the mixture was a dark green, almost black substance. Malfoy was instructed to drink it, and he did so. Then the cup was passed to Ginny.

As Harry saw the cup heading to her lips, he felt the same sensation he had when he first fell into the Lifestream. His scar began to burn and it felt like he was being pushed by some incredible current. Then everything went green again. He found himself floating in the endless green void, not far away were the forms of Eiko and Seth. They were both being tossed about like kites in a windstorm. Harry felt them heading toward something, then he was looking at the forms of several dark robed figures in white masks, bowing before him.

"Today is the day we begin our conquest of this planet," said a voice Harry immediately recognized as Voldemort's. "Look upon your lord, my friends. See me transcend the very boundaries of the planet."

Voldemort began to gather energy and a ring of Death Eaters surrounded him. A large rune with smaller ones etched throughout it began to glow under the feet of the Death Eaters and Voldemort. Harry didn't know what Tom was doing, but he didn't like it one bit.

The whole building began to pulsate with energy, and the entire structure began to glow with a bright blue color. It was the night of a Lunar Eclipse, and as the Earth's shadow began to block out the sight of the moon, a red circle appeared in the center of the moon. It looked like a dark red eye was shining in the sky, and from that eye a bloody tear began to fall. The tear seemed to suck in the rest of the pupil and soon a great throbbing mass of red began to surge from the moon and right for the structure that the Dark Lord was standing on.

"This is not good." said Seth

"You know what he's doing?" asked Harry.

"Yes," said Seth, "He's started the Lunar Cry."

"Meaning?" asked Harry.

"Fiends," said Seth, "Lots and lots of fiends."

"NO!" said Harry mentally screaming. "I can't let him do this!"

"It's too late," said Seth, "Even if you could do something, it's too late to stop the fiends from coming, look on the bright side though, at least now your people won't be totally blindsided when they merge with Temprus."

"He's doing something else," said Eiko, "He's going to try and control them."

Harry did not need to ask how she knew. If he concentrated hard enough, he could feel the intent in Tom's mind. Focusing on the dark mind more, he felt something else. Something... familiar. The more he focused on that familiar presence, the more the world started to change around him. Soon he was not seeing the world through Voldemort's eyes. Instead he found himself standing in a long hallway that looked as though it belonged in Hogwarts.

Eiko appeared beside him and then so did Seth. The serpent looked around in surprise, then a green light surrounded him and instead of a serpent-man there was just a tall blonde man with a scar running diagonally across his eye ridge, sloping left to right. He wore a long white trenchcoat with a red cross on each sleeve and under it was a pair of black pants and black vest. He held the same slender black gunblade that Seth carried and based on his posture, Harry could tell that the beings were one in the same.

"So this is what you really look like," said Harry thoughtfully.

"I don't know how I got like this again," said Seth "I suppose it has something to do with being in the Lifestream."

"Where are we anyway?" asked Eiko.

"I think we're still in Voldemort's mind," said Harry, "I can still kind of sense what he's doing."

"If his Occlumency is even half as good as yours is, we're in for some trouble," said Seth, "I doubt he has mako fiends running around, but I'm sure he has some defenses, so keep your guard up."

"I wonder if my magic works in here," said Harry. He decided to test it out by conjuring a fireball. The magic came with no trouble at all, so Harry tried a few other spells and found that he was in perfect spell casting condition, he was only lacking a weapon. As if on cue, his gunblade appeared in his right hand.

"How'd you do that?" asked Eiko confused

"It comes with practice," said Harry "We're in a mindscape, so you just have to visualize what you want and will it to happen. It's harder to do in someone else's mind, but it can be done."

Eiko concentrated for a moment, and then a very large staff was in her hands. Once she had it she concentrated again and conjured a ball of light in front of her.

"I thought you said you couldn't do magic anymore?" said Harry.

"It's harder now," said Eiko, "And I don't think I'll be summoning anything anytime soon."

Seth swung his gunblade experimentally and blasted one of the walls with an ice spell. "Looks like I'm in good form," he said smirking.

"We need to find a way to stop him," said Harry "If he controls all those fiends, no one's going to stand a chance."

"Where as if they're running around causing unorganized mayhem, they'll screw with him too," said Seth.

"Exactly," said Harry.

They walked along the halls, and Harry again thought that it looked shockingly similar to Hogwarts. There were doors along the corridors and moving passageways hidden in the walls. He even saw a few portraits he recognized. That's when he realized that this place was Hogwarts, or at least a mental representation of it in Tom's mind. Knowing this; that meant there were only three places for Tom to keep the most important information, The Chamber of Secrets, the Slytherin Common Room, or the Head's Office. Since it appeared that they were on the first floor, Harry decided to head for the Head's office.

They walked along the halls in a companionable silence. Harry was a bit unnerved by the lack of defenses in this mind. He was sure that Voldemort had some sort of defenses, otherwise anyone could just peak into his mind, and Harry knew that the Dark Lord was a very accomplished Occlumens. They reached the part of the castle where Harry knew the large Gargoyle to be. Instead of a stone Gargoyle however, they found a very much alive Hydra.

The beast was about ten feet tall and had five serpentine heads that snapped at the three trespassers. The beast's feet and tail were bound to the floor, effectively rooting it in place. Its large crimson body blocked the only means of continuing into the chamber beyond.

Just because it couldn't move though, did not mean it posed no threat. The heads began spewing balls of acid at the mind drifters, forcing them to duck around the corner to avoid being hit. Harry was no stranger to mind battles, and knew that any damage he took while here would carry over into his real body. He gripped his gunblade tightly and prepared to charge the creature. He dashed out, dodging the acid blasts as he went, when he was close enough to the hydra he brought his gunblade around in an arch and sliced three of the heads off. He quickly backed away to avoid the other two heads and retook his position with the others.

"I hope you know that you just made it worse," commented Seth.

"What?" asked Harry, rather confused.

"Take a look," said Eiko.

Harry looked around the corner and paled slightly. Where there had once been three bleeding stubs, there were now six new heads, two spouting from where there had been only one. This made the total of heads eight and made the battle that much harder.

"We need to take out its body," said Seth. "I suggest something strong and with a wide range."

"Okay," said Harry "Seth, you distract it, Eiko put up a barrier around him so he doesn't kill himself, I'll take care of the rest."

"Fine by me," said Seth, "The fiends in your head were getting old anyway."

Seth ran at the beast, jumping this way and that to avoid the various acid blasts that the monster was throwing his way. He brought his gunblade down between two of the heads, causing a deep gash to form where he'd struck. He quickly backed away from the beast, careful to avoid being bitten by its poisonous jaws. One head slipped through his guard and was about to bite him on his shoulder when it slammed into a translucent yellow barrier. Seth gave a nod to Eiko and kept up his attack.

While the gunblader was distracting the hydra, Harry was gathering energy for a Blizzaga attack. He knew that the beast was weak against ice, so this was the best spell to use. He wanted to make sure he used enough power to completely destroy the creature, so he put a substantial amount of magic into casting it. The air around the hydra turned a dark blue and the temperature noticeably dropped in the area. Frost began to form all around the hydra. Seth, seeing what was coming, wisely backed away. The hydra was incased in a large sphere of ice, then without warning, the ice imploded on itself, driving chilly spikes through the hydra at various angles.

As quickly as it had come, the ice melted and the hydra crumpled to the floor, dead. The corpse started to disappear and soon there was no evidence of it having ever been there. The group then started to

head up the newly opened passageway, scaling the spiral staircase and going into the room beyond.

What they found when they got there made Harry sick. The room looked just like Dumbledore's office, except everything was wrong somehow. Instead of the silver instruments that once adorned the desk, now there were bones and skulls of various creatures, including humans. Instead of there being portraits of former headmasters, there were animated portraits of various Death Eaters doing unspeakable things to both wizards and Muggles.

The most disturbing thing of all was what was in place of Fawkes. Where the phoenix once perched there was a large bust of the Dark Lord himself. He seemed to be looking over the grizzly scene in the room with satisfaction, directly above the bust of Voldemort was a portrait, the contents of which made Harry's blood boil. It was of Voldemort casting various curses on a red headed woman and a man with messy black hair, his parents.

Harry's temper got the better of him, and before he could stop himself, he cast an explosion hex on the bust of Voldemort. He didn't stop there. The portraits were soon set aflame and the desk was turned to ashes, along with the bones scattered across it. There was a book case in the corner and Harry destroyed that too. Eiko and Seth tried to stop him, warning him that he'd give them away, but Harry didn't care.

Suddenly the room began to shift and the group found themselves standing in a stone room devoid of any doors or windows, the room had no possible way in or out.

"I see I have some uninvited guests," said a voice from nowhere. "You have a lot of guts, Potter, coming into my mind and attacking my memories like that."

Harry was still fuming about what he had seen and was in no mood to deal with Voldemort. "I'm going to enjoy killing you Tom." he said darkly "It'll give me great pleasure to watch you die slowly and painfully."

"My, my." said Voldemort mockingly. "The Daily Prophet was right, Harry Potter has gone dark."

"Let us out of here." demanded Seth

"Oh no, no, no," said Voldemort, "You just got here. Why don't you stay a while?"

Spikes started to form from the ceiling and the side walls. The walls and ceiling themselves began to come together, further limiting the already limited space in the square room.

"Shit!" Harry swore loudly as he desperately looked around for a way out. His efforts were in vain, as there was no exit.

The three of them began casting every destructive spell he could think of. Stone melting curses, blasting hexes, explosion curses, even the Killing Curse, nothing made a dent in Voldemort's walls. Seth was trying to use his gunblade to push the walls apart, but his too failed. Eiko put a barrier around them and tried to use it to keep the spikes at bay, it worked, but it didn't look like she could hold it for long. Harry reinforced the barrier, but he too was unsure of how long he could maintain it. The spikes were almost touching them, when suddenly they stopped.

Harry looked around confused, but was even more bewildered when the spikes disappeared and a door opened out of the wall. Not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth, Harry and the others wisely took the new exit. They found themselves in a room with a thick purple haze. The room seemed to be very large, and it appeared that they were standing somewhere inside the vast void-like chamber.

Harry tried to take a step and realized that his foot was stuck on something; he looked down and realized that he was standing on a something very wet and sticky. It was like a carpet, but upon closer scrutiny, Harry realized that it was a series of silk chords, all woven together in an intricate pattern. Looking beyond the haze, Harry saw that the entire area was strewn with the silk, making it appear as though one giant spider or series of spiders had made the web.

"This is just nasty," said Eiko, lifting her foot off the sticky web and grimacing at the ooze that trickled off her bare foot.

"At least we've got shoes on," said Seth. He picked up his boot and inspected it and a slight frown came upon his face as well. "I'll have to agree with you though, this is disgusting."

"We could just burn the whole thing," said Harry, "But we don't know what's below this web."

"We should just pick a direction and go," said Eiko, "We've got nothing to loose."

"I say we go..." started Harry. He was interrupted from picking a direction when he saw a glowing red light in the distance. "...that way!" he said pointing to the light.

No one had any complaints about his decision, so they headed toward the brightly twinkling red light. They walked for what seemed like ages, nothing happened, they just slowly drew closer to the red light. As they got closer the purple haze started to grow thicker, and it was when Harry walked through one particularly large cloud of it, that he realized the danger from it. His skin began to burn as if it were being prodded with red hot pokers all over. His body was wracked with a throbbing ache and he had to use all he had just to remain standing.

Images began to flow through his mind, all the beatings with the Dursleys, every demeaning thing he had ever been told. His doubts about himself began to force themselves to the front of his mind and he began a cycle of seeing every painful experience he had ever had. It was like reliving a nightmare. He felt it every time he remembered Dudley or Vernon punching him, every slap from Petunia. The pang in his heart whenever they would remind him how unwanted he was and how worthless his parents had been.

When he got to his Hogwarts days, his mind seemed to skip over the good memories; instead he relived the memories where he had been scared for his life, or in intense pain. He felt the basilisk's fangs on his forearm and he felt the poison begin to spread over his body. He was

in third year again and this time he felt the pain of himself slamming into the ground from off his broom, he felt the chill of hundreds of Dementors swarming around him, and he felt the same dread as one of them lifted him up and drew back its hood.

Before he could experience anything else, he was roughly yanked out of the fog by a pair of gloved hands. He looked into Seth's face, concern clear on the guardian's features.

"I think you should avoid the thick patches," said Seth.

"Yeah," said Harry.

They continued walking toward the red light, and soon it was so bright that they could not see in front of them. It was at this point that the light totally disappeared and they found themselves at the center of the web. Standing in front of them was the largest spider Harry had ever seen. It stood on eight gargantuan legs. Its legs were positioned under the hind part of its body. It had a chest that stuck out of the front of its body atop of which sat a giant head, poison dripping from its clicking mandibles. On the sides of its torso were two arms that held vicious looking claws at the end. All in all, the spider looked something like a centaur, only with arachnid parts all around.

Underneath the spider was a thick cloud of purple haze, it was so thick that the cloud almost looked black, Harry could barely make out the shape of something within the cloud and realized that the spider was guarding this. The arachnid locked all eight of its eyes onto the group and charged toward them.

Harry wasted no time in blasting it with a Flare spell, burning it severely and sending it flying a few yards away. The spider quickly recovered, but was met with Seth's gunblade as it charged back towards the group. Harry was right in the fray as well, dodging the spider's clumsy stabs with its legs and claws and delivering continual blows with his gunblade. The two gunbladers leapt backwards to survey their damage. The spider was cut in several places and had a nasty burn on its chest, but was otherwise unhurt.

The beast let out an unearthly screech, causing the three warriors to hold their ears in pain. The spider used the opening to charge at them and grab both Harry and Seth with each of its claws. Once it had them it began to slowly squeeze the life out of them with its claws. From its mouth it began to spew the same purple haze that surrounded the room. The fog descended upon the two struggling warriors, making them weak and making them relive the worst parts of their existence.

It was at this point, that something strange happened to Harry. He was being racked with the same pain as before, but this time the memory was totally unrecognizable to him, but he did feel the emotions and sensations from it. He was in great pain, and he felt a deep sadness and intense loss. He began to see a picture, but it was unclear. For a moment it looked as though he was in the Chamber of Secrets. The brief image was of a chamber that looked far newer, but no less imposing. He was facing two men; one had a long beard and a snake-like appearance. The other was a tall man with reddish-blond hair. He felt anger at both the men, but more so towards the snake man. As quickly as the image came it faded, leaving Harry confused and bewildered.

He began to experience the familiar events of the night Voldemort was resurrected. It was just before his duel with the Dark Lord, that the images ceased, and he felt himself being dropped back down to the sticky webbing below the spider. He quickly looked up to see Eiko struggling to maintain the barrage of magic bolts she was casting at the spider. The beast itself had dropped himself and Seth and was advancing towards the summoner. Harry quickly summoned his fallen gunblade and ran towards the spider. He realized that he wouldn't make it in time, so he cast a Flare spell at the spider's flank.

The beast was caught off guard by the powerful spell and its entire hind section was completely disintegrated. The spider lost its balance and fell to the floor. Seth didn't give it a chance to get up. He leapt into the air and came down on top of the spider's head with his gunblade, cleaving it in two, and effectively killing it.

The fog around the room began to disappear along with the spider. Soon they were able to see what the spider had been guarding. It

appeared to be a large sac made of webbing. Harry went over to it and saw that it was moving slightly. He banished the webbing and gasped at what he saw.

“Ron!” he sputtered in surprise.

The redhead slowly opened his eyes and looked around groggily. “You made it mate,” he said weakly.

Harry helped him to his feet and looked him over, still not believing that he had found his friend. Then he remembered the state Ron had been in last he saw him, and his features immediately took on a guarded expression.

Ron seemed to pick up on this and tensed slightly in Harry’s grasp.

“It’s really me Harry,” said Ron solemnly “We’re inside Voldemort’s mind; I’m all that’s left of... well me.”

“What do you mean?” asked Harry

“Well...” said Ron and he began to explain to Harry all about how he had been possessed and the things he had been forced to do. Harry’s expression grew more and colder as Ron went on. He was shocked at how well Voldemort had been able to manipulate people and he was angry that no one had listened to Moody, Remus, Tonks or Ginny. If they had, they probably would not be dead. Ron went on to tell him about the merger process and Harry informed him that he had been aware of Voldemort doing something like that.

“So I’ve been in here ever since,” said Ron, “I couldn’t move because of that damn spider and that gas... (he shuddered) it made me see such horrible things.”

“I can’t imagine how long you’ve managed to hang on this long,” said Harry sympathetically, “I haven’t had the easiest time myself.”

“Yeah.” said Ron “What the bloody hell happened to you? You just disappeared without a trace.”

"After I disappeared I found myself in a desert." said Harry. He then explained to Ron all of his travels through Temprus, skirting over a few details, but giving him the general idea. "So now I think the Lifestream is making my links go haywire."

"You've got problems mate," said Ron thoughtfully, "We've got to stop Voldemort now though, he's almost done with the ritual, and we can't let him get control of those monsters."

"Do you know how we can do that?" asked Harry.

"Follow me," said Ron. He waved his hands and a door appeared.

"So it was you." said Eiko

"Oh, you mean the pit?" asked Ron as he ushered them through the door. "Yeah that was me, I could tell what Tom was trying to do to you, so I waited until he was distracted again and used some of my limited control to bring you here. The light was also me."

"Thanks for that mate," said Harry.

"Anytime," said Ron.

When they got through the door, they found themselves in what appeared to be a library. Ron led them over to a book that was surrounded by a force field of some sort.

"This is where he keeps most of his spell knowledge," said Ron, "I'd tell you to destroy it all, but I want to look through it first. Now that I'm out as long as I lay low he should leave me alone. That book there is his knowledge of the ritual, get rid of that and he won't know what to do."

He turned to walk away, but Harry stopped him, "Where are you going Ron?"

"I want to be far away from this room when you destroy that book," said Ron, "I'm not ready to fight against him yet, and I have a feeling that you three will be leaving soon."

"I understand Ron, take care of yourself," said Harry.

"You too mate," said Ron, "Once I find a way to get out of here, I'll try to find a way to get you back."

"Don't bother," said Harry, "I appreciate the thought, but I'll handle it."

"If you say so, Harry," said Ron, he waved his hand and another door appeared, when he went through it the door disappeared and the group was left alone in the library.

"Here goes nothing," said Harry. He gathered energy in his hands and blasted the force field with the strongest Firaga spell he could muster. A gigantic ball of flames enveloped the book and then there was a series of tiny explosions all throughout the large fireball.

When the spell vanished all that remained was a scorch mark where the book had once been.

...

The key point in the ritual was arriving. The fiends were almost to the planet, and he needed to cast the spell just before they reached the Earth. He began to recite the incantation that he had memorized and the runes began to glow once more. A blue aura surrounded the crimson mass that was on its way to the planet and just as Voldemort was about to complete the ritual, the process of what to do totally escaped his mind. He desperately searched his mind for the information, but only came up with a blank. He did not know how it had happened, but he knew that Harry Potter had something to do with it.

The Dark Lord gritted his teeth in rage, but otherwise showed no signs of anger. The throbbing red mass lost its blue aura and was almost right on top of the assembled group. The Death Eaters began to fidget nervously and Voldemort knew he had to do something. Since he couldn't control the creatures, letting them all assemble here was pointless and needlessly dangerous. He waved his hand and sent a surge of force at the incoming mass of fiends. The spell

caused the whole pillar to dissipate and sent the fiends flying in all directions. He knew he couldn't control them outright, but that didn't mean he couldn't still use them to create havoc. It would just be far less effective than he'd originally intended.

...

Harry and the others were once again surrounded by a green light. They then found themselves looking out a grand window in an immaculately decorated room. Whoever they were connected to now, obviously liked style. The room had a large Queen four poster bed, a fireplace, a lavatory off to one corner and a grand wardrobe with gold trimming. The hangings on the windows were a pale white color and the wardrobes and bed matched it perfectly. The carpet was a gold color, much like the trimming on the furniture and the room had an overall feel of grandeur.

"Are the guests comfortable?" asked the new person to someone behind him.

"As much as can be expected," said the person, and Harry though he recognized their voice.

"Have they given up trying to escape yet?" asked the person Harry now realized to be Kuja.

"No." said the other person, slightly amused, "The SeeDs especially put up good fights every time someone goes to feed them."

"Why not cut off the food then?" asked Kuja.

"The emperor doesn't want to be seen as cruel, what a joke," scoffed the other man, "He can order the destruction of a whole country, but he won't starve his prisoners."

"Didn't they used to be your friends?" asked Kuja, he turned to face the other occupant of the room and Harry recognized him as the man he'd fought on Great Glacier.

"That was a long time ago," said the dark knight.

"Then you won't mind if I play with them a little?" asked Kuja sadistically.

"Do what you want, just leave Andrea alive," said the warrior, "And in good condition."

"You drive a hard bargain, but I'll try," said Kuja.

"If anything happens to her..." said the knight warningly

"I'm sure your sorceress would love to know you care so much about another woman." said Kuja smirking.

"I'll pretend I didn't hear that," said the warrior menacingly.

"You do that," said Kuja, "Just remember, Antym, that it isn't wise to get in my way."

"Your threats don't faze me," said Antym, "You just remember that I've got my eye on you."

The knight left the room without another word, leaving Kuja alone with his thoughts.

"Did you see that?" he asked the air.

"Yes," said someone from the corner of the room.

"He could cause problems for me; I want you to keep an eye on him. In the meantime though, you have an appointment with the emperor."

"I understand." said the other person.

"He's going to try and get you to agree to a betrothal contract with his heir," said Kuja, "Don't take it until he agrees to let you visit the lower levels of the castle."

"Betrothal?" asked the person somewhat hesitantly.

“Are you still trying to resist?” asked Kuja in both annoyance and surprise. “I’m not sure you’re even worth the trouble. Crucio!”

Kuja turned to face his victim and Harry felt his anger soar at what he saw. Sheyna was writhing on the floor, screaming in pain from the Cruciatus Curse. Before Harry could even try to do anything to stop him, his world was once again enveloped in green and he felt himself being pulled towards something. There was a white flash, and then he found himself standing in nothing but darkness.

“What?” he asked confused, “Eiko? Seth?”

He received no answer, so he called again, louder, “Eiko? Seth?”

There was still no answer and Harry began to worry that they had been separated. He couldn’t even feel Seth’s presence in his mind anymore. Suddenly the world shifted and he found himself standing on a barren gray landscape. The sky overhead was gray and all around he saw cracking gray terrain. There was nothing else, just gray and more gray. The place gave off an heir of absolute loneliness and depression.

“Wow, a visitor.” said someone from behind Harry, “Haven’t seen one of those in a long time.”

Harry turned around and came face to face with a young boy wearing a golden outfit. He had a hood drawn over his head and his skin was a deep tan color. There were runes all over his outfit, written in silver and his pants were a darker gold than his shirt. His eyes, what Harry could see of them, glowed with a hidden power and wisdom. His eyes made him seem a lot older than he looked otherwise.

“Who are you?” asked Harry, “And where am I?”

“As for your second question,” said the boy, “You’re in a place that exists outside normal reality.”

“What?” asked Harry, confused.

"It's hard to explain, but basically this is what lies beyond, beyond everything. Outside space, outside time, it has no meaning in the larger scheme of things. How you get in and out of here all depends on you."

"Okay," said Harry, still not quite understanding it, "So who are you?"

"Now that's a tough one," said the boy, "I've had many names in my lifetime, but I suppose you can call me Bahaumut."

"You mean you're the Aeon Bahaumut?" asked Harry incredulously.

"Don't mock me human," said the boy, his voice getting much deeper and his jovial demeanor severely lessening, "To answer your question, no I am, yet I'm not."

"Huh?" said Harry intelligently.

"What I mean is, a long time ago I used to be the Aeon Bahaumut. I was one of the most powerful among my kind, but there was a time when that power started to get the best of me, I couldn't handle it, so my essence divided in order to contain all my power. I ended up here as a result, and the four components of my consciousness took my place in normal reality."

"So you're like a remnant or something?" asked Harry.

"I suppose you could say that," said Bahaumut thoughtfully.

"Not that I'm not interested, but how do I get out of here?" asked Harry

"I can get you out, but you'll have to do me a favor," said Bahaumut, his jovial tone returning

"What's that?" asked Harry

"Help me get out of here once you get back to the other side." said Bahaumut.

"How do I do that?" asked Harry

"Find the four holders of my essence, one has my namesake, one calls himself Neo, the other Tiamat and the last is Zero."

"So you want me to find them, then what?" asked Harry

"Gain their favor, after that, the rest should fall into place," said Bahaumut.

"Well..." said Harry tentatively, "I found Tiamat already, but I kind of killed him."

"Oh, that was you." said Bahaumut "His junction stone was destroyed, but Espers never truly die, he'll return in a new stone eventually, I'll warn you, he will be quite angry with you though."

"I'll bet," said Harry, "I agree to the conditions, now what?"

"Close your eyes," said Bahaumut.

No sooner did Harry do this, then he felt himself spinning around and then he hit the ground hard. Just before his world collapsed into blackness, he heard Bahaumut speak to him.

"I got you as close as I could to where Zero is; good luck."

...

A/N: This was a hard chapter to write, not a lot of action, FYI, I have written the first battle between Harry and Kuja and I'm very pleased with the results. I'll have the next chapter up ASAP, thanks in advance for the reviews and be sure to keep them coming .

To Conquer a Dragon God

Eiko appeared in the middle of a large clearing. The clearing was in the middle of what looked to be the ruins of a city. The once intricate structures bore holes in their alabaster frames and some of them looked as though there were going to fall at any minute. Moss covered some of the structures, while all that remained of some were merely marble support pillars. Eiko looked around for her companions, only to realize that they were not there. She decided that it would be best to explore the unfamiliar surroundings and along the way possibly find the others.

She walked toward one particularly large building. Unlike the others it was still in relatively good condition, considering its ancient appearance anyway. The building resembled a large seashell that looked as though it had been hallowed out. Once inside the building, she saw that it had a long spiraling walkway that appeared to go all the way to the top of the building. In the center of the building there was a large hole that looked to lead down into a seemingly bottomless pit. To Eiko, it looked like the walkway should descend down into the hole, but there was no path, and upon closer inspection, she realized that the floor in the center of the room was glass, or something that greatly resembled glass.

She walked to the top of the building and looked out toward the spanning landscape beyond. It seemed as though the city was in some kind of valley, that much was clear from the high mountains she saw in the distance. She turned around to look out the window on the opposite side of the building. In that direction there were mountains as well, further proving her theory of the place being in a valley.

She suddenly caught sight of a bright green light, seeming to come from the ground in one part of the city. The ground suddenly burst open and a geyser of lifestream came shooting up from the hole. Something was thrown from the geyser and was shot high into the air. Eiko followed the progress of the thing with her eyes, and suddenly realized that its current path would take it right into the building she was standing in. She looked up and saw that the ceiling already sported a large hole. She jumped backwards as the thing came hurtling through the hole in the ceiling, she briefly made out the form

of a human within the glowing lifestream around him, and realized that it could only be Harry.

Harry's form went right through the 'glass' barrier at the bottom of the building, and Eiko saw his form descend to the point where she could no longer see him. She made her way down to the bottom of the building and examined the barrier again. Just like before, it felt as though she were touching glass.

"How do I get down there?" she yelled in frustration.

As if on cue, a staircase made of blue light appeared at the bottom of the walkway. Eiko walked to the first step and hesitantly lowered her right foot toward it. She was a bit surprised when her foot passed through the glass and landed on a firm surface. Seeing that the stairs were solid, she began to follow Harry into the dark abyss.

The darkness of the cavern was almost absolute, the only thing Eiko could make out was the bright blue staircase she was walking on, and even that didn't illuminate anything. Holding out her hand, she could only make out its outline if she held it over the bright steps. As she continued walking, the darkness began to subside and a strange violet glow began to tinge the area. Soon she could see perfectly again, and she saw that she was descending into a large city. The city looked much more in tact than the one above, but it still held the empty feeling that its counterpart on the surface had. She looked around, and saw that the staircase lead to an odd altar. Someone was lying on the floor of the altar, and it looked to be someone she recognized.

She quickly made her way down to the prone form of Harry Potter, just in time to see him stir and try to shakily stand. She helped him to his feet and he nodded in thanks.

"Where are we?" he finally asked after a moment.

"I'm not sure." said Eiko "I'm pretty sure we're out of the lifestream though."

"Yeah, I'm not in anyone's head now." said Harry

"I'm still a little confused about all that." said Eiko

"It was weird, wasn't it?" said Harry

"There was no question about that, but who were those people?" asked the summoner

"The first was my ex-girlfriend, next was Voldemort, and last was Kuja." said Harry

"And those people in Black?" asked Eiko, "You called them 'Unspeakables?'"

"They're like a secret branch of the government." said Harry "No one is really sure what they do, but it sounds to me like they're trying to stop Voldemort."

"I suppose that's good then." said Eiko "He didn't seem like a very nice individual."

"That's an understatement." said Harry

"And that blond guy?" asked Eiko "That was Seth right?"

"Yeah." said Harry "That was the first time I saw him in human form."

They stood in silence for a moment, until Eiko broke it. "You've got a lot of problems." she said suddenly.

"I suppose I do." said Harry

"Any reason why we're still down here?" she asked him. "I'm sure you're anxious to get to Baron and save your friends."

"There's something here." said Harry

"What?" asked Eiko "It looks like a deserted city to me."

"You mean you can't even sense magical energy without your horn?" asked Harry somewhat incredulously.

"I'm haven't really tried to sense anything." said Eiko defensively "I'm sure if I tried, I'd sense whatever it is you're feeling." she closed her eyes and let her senses reach out for any foreign magic, she could feel the power radiating off of Harry and was momentarily stunned, if it hadn't been for her Eidelons, Harry would have had no problems with her, based on his power anyway. She suddenly felt something else, something she'd felt before, a long time ago, but somewhat different.

"It feels like..." said Eiko, trying to piece together where she'd felt this power before. "It feels...like Bahaumut."

"Zero, if I got his name right." said Harry

"What?" asked Eiko confused.

"On my way out of the Lifestream, I somehow took a detour." said Harry "Long story short, I need to find all four essences of Bahaumut."

"That won't be easy." said Eiko "I don't see either of them just letting you gain their power."

"I'll do what I need to do." said Harry "I don't really have much of a choice, and if their going to make me stronger, that's always a plus."

"Not always." said Eiko "Everyone has their limit Harry, if someone gets too much power, they tend to abuse it, I don't care how pure your heart is."

"I just want to keep the people I love alive." said Harry

"Admirable, but in the end, is it really worth it?" asked Eiko "If you damn the entire world just to save the few people you love, what good have you really done?"

“Why are you so concerned about me destroying the world?” asked Harry “I want to do three things; kill Kuja, find a way home so I can kill Voldemort and stop whatever it is Zidane is planning. That will keep everyone safe.”

“Really?” asked Eiko sarcastically “I gave you more credit than that Harry. That was a pretty naïve statement. People are always going to die, weather you stop the big-bad evil or not. Someone will always be there to take its place.”

“Then I’ll stop them too.” said Harry

“What if you’re one of them.” said Eiko

“I won’t be.” said Harry “I’m not like that.”

“Everyone has darkness inside them Harry.” said Eiko “I know you’ve delved into it, I can feel it, and I saw it in the battle we had. You have a great deal of power, Harry, if you ever lost control...”

“Don’t worry, I won’t.” said Harry

“You don’t know that.” said Eiko “I didn’t tell you before, but you need to know, when you went into the room with all the Pyreflies, they did something to you.”

“What?” asked Harry, feeling slightly alarmed.

“It’s not bad, not really, but it could be.” said Eiko “It’s called Trance, it happens when you get an extreme need for power.”

“Kind of like a Limit Break.” said Harry

“Exactly.” said Eiko “Only much more powerful.”

“How is that bad?” asked Harry

“It causes your power and abilities to increase exponentially and it brings out your most basic assets. Those are different for everyone, for me it made my white magic much stronger and also made my

Eidelons have a power boost, for Zidane, it made his power increase about 100 times. And since you're already extremely powerful with dark magic, if you released that kind of power and couldn't handle it, you could end up destroying the entire planet."

"You think one person could single handedly destroy a planet?" asked Harry "I'm sorry but that's just too hard to fathom, even for me."

"I've seen it." said Eiko sadly "When Kuja went into trance for the first time, he blew up Terra with an Ultima spell."

"I see what you mean." said Harry "If I ever need to use it, I'm sure I can handle it."

"I hope so." said Eiko

"I need to find Zero." said Harry, changing the subject "I know it's here somewhere."

"You're going to have to explore this place then." said Eiko

"You're not coming?" asked Harry

"I've thought about it." said Eiko, and I think I need to think things through a little more, I'll find you when I'm ready to start relearning magic again, but until then I think I'll try it on my own."

"Suit yourself." said Harry indifferently.

Eiko turned to leave, heading back up the same staircase she used to get down to where Harry was, before she started climbing the stairs, she turned back to Harry. "Remember what I told you, don't let the power go to your head."

"Like I told you before, don't worry about it." said Harry getting annoyed.

"I hope you're right." she thought to herself. "Because if you give in to the darkness, we're all doomed, because not even Zidane would be able to stop you."

...

The room was dark and smelled of blood, rust and urine. It was cold as well, almost freezing, but that was probably a good thing, if the air was warm, the prisoners would have surely suffocated. The room housed several different cells and lay deep underneath Baron Castle, and it was where Sophia and the others were now.

The ex-SeeD in question was in a cell with Andrea and had been there for the last two weeks, or at least, she thought it was two weeks. It was odd how it only seemed like yesterday when she'd been in the dungeon at Alexandria castle. At least that one had been relatively clean. She was sure she'd seen a few rats scampering around the place. It was still a bit of a shock as to how they'd come to be here. It had all happened so fast...

...

Sophia had been the first one to reach the top of the slope coming out of the Iafa Tree. Bastian and Ethan were close behind her, followed by Andrea. Harry and Sheyna were the last ones coming up the slope, so Sophia found it quite alarming when there was a sudden rumbling sound, followed by Andrea and Sheyna running up the slope. Sophia waited a few minutes for Harry to emerge, but he never did.

"Where's Harry?" asked Bastian, voicing her thought.

"The passageway collapsed." said Sheyna, Sophia found it odd that she didn't sound very concerned.

"That's not how it happened." said Andrea, turning to glare at the other woman.

"What do you mean?" asked Sheyna with mock innocence.

"You didn't...!" said Sophia, starting to catch on.

"She did." said Andrea "Harry had stopped for some reason, and when I turned around to see what was taking him so long, I saw her blast the archway shut."

"Don't worry." said Sheyna patronizingly, "You'll be joining him real soon."

Everyone had their weapons drawn and trained on the raven haired girl.

"Resorting to violence so soon?" she mocked "I'm sorry but I don't have time for this, and besides, you should be more concerned with them." she pointed over the shoulders of the assembled group. The clanking of weapons and the rushing sound of magical energy was heard and felt from behind them. Sophia turned around and gasped at what she saw.

There were over a hundred soldiers, as well as several nasty looking fiends. And at the front of the soldiers was none other than Kuja, but he wasn't alone. A woman with long brown hair and grey eyes stood at his side. She wore a long silver gown that had an odd ornamental head dress coming out of the back. It also had two thin shawls hanging off the sides of the head dress, it seemed a bit over the top to Sophia.

Beside the woman stood a man with dark silver hair, he looked familiar but she couldn't place it. His eyes were an odd blue-grey color. He had two gunblades clipped onto his back, and something about the way he carried himself kept nagging at the back of her mind.

"Job well done Sheyna." said Kuja "Now all we need to do is deal with Potter. Would you like the honor Mia?"

"Certainly." said the woman. Now Sophia recognized her as Sorceress Mia.

The sorceress cast a Quake spell at the lafa tree. The spell was so intense that the tree started to sink into the ground. A cloud of green smoke began to seep out of the cracks in the ground and the Pyreflies began to flutter around wildly. As suddenly as it began, the

spell ended. The Iafa Tree was now several feet shorter, meaning that the roots were no longer above ground.

Sophia was astounded by the amount of power the woman had, she'd never fought a Sorceress before, and had only heard of their power. While she was trained to deal with something like that, it was still unnerving to see it up close.

"If you're going to kill us, get it over with." said Andrea still gripping her gunblade and ready to take out anyone who came too close.

"We aren't going to kill you yet." said Kuja "Potter will need to have a reason to come to Baron. That Earthquake spell wasn't meant to kill him, just slow him down."

"We won't come quietly." said Bastian

"You should stand down while you have a chance." said the other man, speaking for the first time.

The sound of his voice was familiar as well, and looking at the others, Sophia could tell they felt the same.

"And if we refuse?" asked Ethan

To answer his question, the man came charging forward at lightning speed, before anyone could react, he'd drove his fist into Ethan's stomach and had snatched the spear from his hands. In one fluid motion he brought the butt of the spear down onto Ethan's head, driving him into the ground and knocking him unconscious. And just like that, he was back at the sorceress' side, Ethan's spear, still in hand.

"You bastard!" yelled Bastian, and rushed toward the knight, only to be thrown back by an unseen force, the sorceress lowered her hand and smirked at the three warriors.

"Now do you surrender." said Kuja "You're outnumbered and out matched, just come quietly."

Bastian slowly got to his feet and prepared to charge again, but Andrea put a hand on his shoulder.

“Let me.” she said and turned to the gunblader.

“You and me, one on one.” she said “If I win, you let us go, if you win we’ll come quietly.”

The man looked at the sorceress as if seeking approval, she nodded and he started to walk forward.

“I accept.” he said

Andrea didn’t waste anymore time. She moved toward the gunblader and quickly closed the distance between them. The gunblader blocked her first thrust with Ethan’s spear and pushed her back with tremendous force. The SeeD was sent flying through the air, but she managed to land on her feet about twenty feet away. She barely had both feet on the ground, when the spear came whizzing towards her. She batted it away with her gunblade. In the blink of an eye, the knight had drawn a gunblade with a blade made of golden energy. Sophia recognized the base model as a Lion Heart gunblade, but she didn’t know what it was with the alterations.

The force with which he struck Andrea’s gunblade caused the SeeD to wince in pain. The knight kept up this assault. Andrea was totally on the defensive, and Sophia could tell she was giving it her all, this man was simply better. That knowledge also seemed to be evident to Andrea’s mind, as Sophia could see the almost resigned look in her friend’s eyes.

With one might strike, the gunblade in Andrea’s hands broke in two. The knight’s blade continued on its course, right for Andrea’s face. The SeeD quickly ducked her head to the left and managed to avoid the lethal blow, instead the tip of the knight’s gunblade caused a deep gash on the side of her neck. The SeeD quickly put her right hand to the cut to stop the bleeding. She faced her opponent, still gripping the broken handle of her gunblade.

The man raised his blade and pointed it at her

“Do you yield?” he asked

Andrea simply glared at him, and this seemed to annoy the man, because he pulled the trigger on his blade, sending a bolt of energy at Andrea’s left arm, causing her to drop the handle of her gunblade.

“I’ll ask again.” he said, “Do you give up?”

Sophia knew that Andrea was not a quitter, she fully expected her to try and fight until death, so she was surprised when Andrea simply nodded and collapsed to her knees. The soldiers rushed forward, and Sophia and Bastian prepared to defend themselves and the others.

“I wouldn’t.” said Sheyna from behind them. Sophia turned to see Sheyna holding a large ball of fire and aiming it at Ethan’s head. “Resist and he dies.”

“What the hell are you doing Sheyna!” asked Bastian in frustration. “You hate Baron, why are you working for Kuja?”

“That is none of your concern.” said Sheyna

The soldiers grabbed them and bound them all in chains. They were herded onto an airship and soon they arrived at ‘their new home’ as Kuja had called it.

...

Andrea had been quiet ever since that day. She hadn’t said a word, and Sophia was worried. She’d tried to get the SeeD to talk to her several times, but Andrea would either just look at her oddly or slump in the corner of the cell. At least she wasn’t starving herself as Sophia had been afraid she’d do. They only go one meal a day, if they were lucky, and that was a stretch even calling it a meal; stale bread and a cup of water, or a bowl of some yellow pasty stuff.

Worse yet they had been stripped of all their Materia and Junctions, as well as their weapons. All this combined to make Sophia a very

agitated person. She looked over at her silent cellmate and decided to try and get her to talk once again.

“Andrea.” she called, but she got no answer “I know you can hear me, I’m starting to get really annoyed with this silent shit.” Sophia was a bit shocked at herself, she hardly ever cursed, but she didn’t care much right now. “Why are you acting like this, I know things look bad, but we’ll get out.”

“No we won’t.” said Andrea hoarsely

“How do you know?” asked Andrea, trying to keep her talking.

“We have no weapons, no junctions and no materia. How are we supposed to fight?” countered the SeeD.

“We’ll find a way.” said Sophia

“These people aren’t inexperienced with prisoners like Alexandria, we won’t be leaving unless they want us to leave.”

“Harry’s still out there.” said Sophia, not willing to lose hope.

“He was buried under tons of rubble, and that gas was from mako, meaning the Lifestream probably surged down there, even if he did survive that somehow, he wouldn’t even know where we are.”

Sophia was beginning to see her point, but this still didn’t explain why she’d been so quiet the past two weeks.

“Why haven’t you been talking lately?” she asked, throwing caution to the wind.

“I didn’t know what to say.” said Andrea. “I still don’t, I just can’t believe he...”

She took a deep breath and Sophia was starting to get worried, who was she talking about?

“...I saw it now, I knew before, but now I saw him.” said Andrea.

“Who?” asked Sophia, “You saw who?”

“Antym.” said Andrea

“What?” exclaimed Sophia, then everything started to fit. The man had seemed so familiar, Andrea must have recognized him straight away. “He’s the knight.”

“I just don’t understand.” said Andrea “He would never do that, I know he wouldn’t, but he has.”

Sophia didn’t know what to say either. Antym had been her friend as well, although she wasn’t as close to him as Andrea had been. It was still a hard blow to actually see him on the opposite side as them, she felt betrayed and confused. Before Antym had left on his last mission he’d been his normal, albeit somewhat crabby, self. But when he’d come back, he’d been subdued and closed. Then that night at Balamb everything had changed.

Her thoughts were interrupted by someone coming into the cell block. Kuja stopped in front of their cell and opened the door.

“You.” he said, pointing to Sophia “Come with me.”

Sophia didn’t move

“Must we always make this difficult.” said Kuja, Sophia simply ignored him. “If that’s how you want it then.” He conjured chains around her and gripped one in his hand, he began to walk out of the cell, still holding the end of the chain, Sophia was forced to follow him, or be dragged along the floor. She had no idea what was in store for her, but she had a feeling she wouldn’t like it.

...

Harry looked out over the expanse of the deserted city. The conversation with Eiko was still fresh in his mind. What would happen if he ever gave in to the dark. He’d had no choice but to learn and control the darker aspects of magic. It had saved his life many times

now, and he didn't regret it, but what if? That was always what he seemed to ask himself. What if he couldn't keep doing it? What if he hurt someone he cared for, or what if he was the next evil that threatened the world, would anyone be able to stop him?

"You just have to stop it from happening." said Seth "Don't go beyond your limits, and don't let yourself get lost when you go into Trance."

"I don't' think I'll need to use it." said Harry "I'll only do it if I absolutely have to."

"Then you shouldn't have to worry then." said Seth

"Since you're feeling chatty, mind telling me where Bahaumut Zero is?" asked Harry?"

"How am I supposed to know?" asked Seth

"I thought you guardians could sense each other." said Harry

"I only know he's here, and he's strong." said Seth "There might be some fiends around too, so be careful."

"Thanks for the warning." said Harry

He decided that any direction was as good as the next in order to start looking, he went over to the side of the large altar and jumped. from it, and onto another platform several yards away. It seemed that what once appeared to be a city, was really a network of platforms branching out in every direction. Harry hadn't been traveling long, when something started to follow him. It was actually a group of things. They were purple balls of energy, They were small, only about a foot diameter, and they had little demonic faces. Lightning crackled around them as they floated through the air, making Harry wonder exactly what these things were.

He did a quick scanning spell on them and saw what they were. 'Xiggers' is what they were commonly called, they had an affinity for lightning, but had no elemental weakness. They were resistant to

physical attacks, and the only thing that seemed to hurt them was gravity magic.

Harry didn't give the things a chance to strike first. He concentrated on the spell he wanted to cast and trust his hand forward. A black ball of energy with strings of purple going through it formed in front of his outstretched hand. He threw the ball into the air and it grew as it got higher. The spell was already trained on the Xiggers, so when they tried to spread out, it only caused the spell to stretch accordingly. Harry thrust his hand downward and the ball of energy came crashing down onto the small creatures.

Harry watched in fascination as the spell's affects began to occur. The creatures were twisted at odd angles as the gravity around them became distorted. soon they looked like little more than swirls in the black vacuum and soon, they were no more.

"You know that's the first time I actually cast the Demi spell." said Harry to Seth

"I noticed." said the guardian "Handy spell, you should implement it more."

"Yeah." said Harry

He continued on his way through the labyrinth of platforms, soon he noticed an actual building in the distance, so he continued toward it. The building looked like some kind of temple, as Harry grew closer, he saw unit torches all around the building. He made one final leap and landed at the entrance to the building. He walked inside and came face to face with the statue of an enormous dragon. The dragon stood on four legs, and had two humanoid arms on either side of its upper torso, giving it a centaur-like appearance. As Harry stepped closer to the statue, its eyes started to glow, and a voice began to speak.

"Who enters my shrine?" boomed the voice

"Harry Potter." said Harry bravely

“Why do you seek my power?”

Harry had to think about this one, Bahaumut had said it wasn't wise to tell his remnants what he was trying to do.

“I wish to use your power to defeat my enemy.”

The dragon growled, and suddenly a large black dragon appeared, it was nowhere near the size of the statue, but it was till as large as a behemoth. The beast lunged at Harry, who quickly brought his gunblade around to block the assault. Harry blasted the beast with a Freeze spell, causing a large gash to appear in its side, where the ice had punctured the armor plated scales. Harry stuck at the beast with his gunblade, but even using the trigger mechanism to do more damage, he only managed to put a slight dent into the tough scales.

The dragon took a deep breath and blasted Harry with its super hot breath. The wizard did a quick flame freezing charm on the dragon, making its breath all but useless. The dragon didn't seem to realize it wasn't hurting Harry, so it kept its mouth open, keeping a steady stream of fire on the wizard. Harry cast another Freeze spell, this time aiming right for the dragon's open mouth. The beast's entire head was frozen solid, and Harry quickly ran forward and broke the ice with his gunblade, the dragon was finished after that.

“What do you cherish?” asked the statue.

What did he cherish. Again, this was a hard question for him to answer, but he said the first thing that came to mind.

“My friends, life, all the good things in life.” said Harry.

The dragon grunted, and this time two large blue dragons appeared. They both charged at Harry. The wizard wasted no time, he knew he needed to keep distance between himself and these dragons. He blasted the pair with a Meltdown spell, knowing that if he wanted to finish them quickly, he'd need to be able to attack them directly. The spell caused their scales to become brittle and Harry wasted no time in pressing his advantage. He cast Haste on himself poured energy into this sword. He leapt into the air and brought his blade down on

the first dragon's back. The beast roared in pain as it was chopped in two, Harry didn't give the other dragon a chance to retaliate. He cast a blind spell on it, and was a little surprised to see it work, he followed it up by sealing the beast's magic. Since those two spells worked, Harry decided to try something else.

"Avada Kadavra." the killing curse hit the dragon and it collapsed to the ground, dead."

"Why do you fight?" asked the statue

This question wasn't difficult at all for Harry to answer.

"Because I don't have a choice."

"I see." said the statue.

Suddenly the statue started to look less like stone and more like the silver hide of a gigantic dragon. The beast was almost eight stories tall and at least forty feet wide. It had two sets of wings on its back, and a long, dangerous looking tail. Harry took an involuntary step back as the dragon reared up.

"I am Bahaumut ZERO," said the dragon. "You will have to prove yourself to wield my power."

Harry didn't need to be told twice. He started off the fight in the same way as last time, with a Meltdown spell, unfortunately the spell didn't seem to do anything. The dragon lashed out with its tail and struck Harry in the side. Harry felt his ribs break as the tail smashed into him. He scrambled to get back on his feet, narrowly missing another tail strike.

He leapt at the dragon, hitting it with a flurry of slashes from his blade, he quickly realized however, that his attempts to damage the great dragon weren't working. The beast reached out one of its hands and grabbed the wizard. Harry struggled, but he couldn't break free from the grip.

"It was foolish of you to come here mortal." said Zero "You cannot hope to defeat me."

"Don't get too cocky." Harry choked out.

"I am merely stating fact." said the dragon, added more pressure to his grip.

Harry couldn't help but scream as his ribs were further damaged. In a burst of magical energy he forced the hand to let go burning it and making the dragon hiss in pain. Harry quickly cast a Curaga spell on himself before blasting the dragon with a Flare spell. His spell didn't do anything more than annoy the beast.

"You are only prolonging the inevitable Harry Potter." said Zero "You sentenced yourself to death when you set foot into this temple."

Harry didn't bother to respond. He ran forward, dodging the tail strike sent his way. He jumped onto the retreating appendage and began to run up the dragon's back. He drove his gunblade into the beast's flesh and kept on running at full speed. As he ran he caused a large gash to appear all along the beast's back. He jumped out of the way when Zero used his hand to try and crush him like a bug. Harry started to concentrate on Seth and quickly summoned the GF. Seth appeared as Harry vanished. The guardian moved like lightning, cutting the dragon wherever he saw an opening. The flawless silver hide soon had dents and cracks all along it, and the dragon was clearly infuriated by this fact. He gathered energy in his mouth and blasted Seth with it. The guardian was brought to the ground and struggled to get up.

Seth suddenly disappeared and Harry took his place. He renewed his assault on the dragon, but it didn't last long. Zero flapped his gargantuan wings and slowly rose into the air. He was beginning to gather energy into his mouth, and Harry knew exactly what he was going to do. The wizard quickly jumped up and grabbed the beast's tail as it flew right through the ceiling of the building and up into the air. The dragon kept flying, not even seeming to notice that Harry was gripping his tail. Harry used his magic to push himself off the tail and up toward the dragons head. He began to slash the dragon's face,

but the dragon wouldn't slow down. Harry was sent hurtling toward the ground by a vicious backhand from the dragon.

As he fell, all he could think of was that he was going to die, and he would have failed everyone. He felt a power rushing through him, unlike anything he'd ever felt before, he instantly recognized it as Trance, and threw all caution to the wind and embraced the new power. Pain wracked his entire body, causing him to scream at the top of his lungs. The energy he was emanating caused the ground to tremble. He suddenly stopped in mid air and he began to glow with grey energy. He was surrounded by a dark blue aura and his skin had become a glowing grey color. His hair had gotten even messier and his eyes burned with a green fire. He charged back at the dragon, using his own energy to propel him through the air.

Zero had turned around and was now preparing to obliterate the wizard with his Terra Flare attack. He released the blast, just as Harry came speeding toward him. Harry was suddenly surrounded by white energy, and soon his form was lost in the gigantic bolt of white energy. The two attacks clashed in midair, but zero's was quickly overcome by Harry's. The dragon could only stare in shock as the energy blasted straight through his chest, creating a massive hole right through him.

Zero began to plummet downward and Harry followed him, now releasing the white energy. the dragon crashed to the ground, causing the nearby crumbling structures to fall. Harry landed gracefully beside the fallen dragon. Harry started walking forward, still in Trance, but suddenly it dissipated and Harry collapsed beside Zero.

All was silent, save for the sound of labored breathing by Harry and Zero. The dragon began to disappear in a flash of light. Suddenly there was nothing left but a ball of silver light. It slammed into an unprepared Harry, and the wizard suddenly felt something taking a place inside his mind.

"Odd, I've never seen a mind this organized." said the voice of the dragon, although it was no longer booming.

Harry felt his strength returning, and was already feeling the benefits from the junction. The fatigue of being in trance was now forgotten, he needed to get to Baron to save the others, and now he was sure he had enough power to take on anyone who got in his way, including Kuja.

...

A/N: Sorry again for the late update, I had a lot going on last week, plus a nasty case of writer's block. I'm not sure I'll have a chapter next week though, as I'm going out of town for a week, and unless I finish the next chapter by Tuesday night, you won't see it next Saturday, but I will do my best to finish it and get it out to you and make up for the late update this time. Thanks for being patient with me.

Fall of the Puppet Master

Sophia was unceremoniously dropped back onto the floor of the cell. Andrea could clearly see the many injuries that her friend had sustained. She had cuts all over her arms and one nasty jagged cut along her right cheek. Her arm looked broken and was starting to turn an odd green color, Andrea knew that that meant the wound was poisoned. The oddest thing about Sophia though, was the expression of satisfaction that was on her face. As if she'd somehow managed to do something, even though she'd gotten injured while doing it.

"Sophia" said Andrea, trying to wake the other girl up. She tried again, but still received no answer.

She wished that she could cure the wounds for her, but without her materia or junctions, it was a hopeless cause. She couldn't help but wonder what Kuja had done to the poor girl.

...

Zidane strolled through the Crystal Citadel in a very good mood. This was odd to everyone who saw him as he was hardly ever in a good mood. His mood was so good because he'd seen what Kuja was doing, and it was finally working in his favor. All the mage needed to do now was eliminate Potter and his allies and Zidane wouldn't have to worry about anyone stopping him. And even if by some miracle Potter did manage to defeat Kuja, it wouldn't really matter. The process had already started. The planet of Temprus was beginning to feel the need to defend itself from its inhabitants once more, and once Strife started their Astral Authority project, it would provide the necessary catalyst for his endeavor.

"My, don't you look happy all of a sudden." said Merlin in greeting.

"I am not in the mood for you to tell me how insane my plan is, or how it won't work etc. etc." said Zidane in a bored tone.

"Be that as it may, my opinion hasn't changed." said Merlin "I have no choice but to help you complete this foolish plan of yours, but I don't have to like it."

“As long as you recognize that face, we won’t have anymore problems.” said Zidane “In spite of your annoying tendencies, you’re still too valuable to send into the Underworld.”

“I came to give you a status report.” said Merlin “The Lifestream of Temprus is beginning to break the surface of the planet in several places. The merger needs to happen soon, I’d say within the next fifteen Temprian years.”

“That’s not too far away.” said Zidane “I wonder if Earth will still be in conflict by that time.”

“I sincerely hope not.” said Merlin “It will be hard enough once the merger is done and you use the new planet as a battleground. If there are already wars going on there, it will make things much more chaotic.”

“I could care less.” said Zidane “I was only curious. The people on that planet mean nothing to me, I just need the power of Weapon.”

“Indeed.” said Merlin “And how had you planned on awakening Earth’s Weapons?”

“With the way things are going on that planet, the Weapons should awaken on their own,” said Zidane “Especially with the reintroduction of fiends onto the planet.”

“I hope you realize that this plan is...” started Merlin

“One more word and it’s the Underworld for you.” said Zidane “I hear Sephiroth is looking for some new people to torture.”

This threat effectively stopped Merlin from commenting on Zidane’s plan, much to the genome’s amusement.

...

Kuja was not happy, in fact, ‘not happy’ was a vast understatement, he was furious. The damn girl had gone into Trance. Not that this had

been unexpected, but the power she possessed when this happened was astounding. He'd been caught off guard by the amount of power she held, and as a result, he'd been injured quite badly. It wasn't anything a Curaga couldn't fix, but the fact that he even had to use a healing spell was unnerving.

If that wasn't enough, he'd also had the same problem with the two men. They'd been forced to fight a few fiends from Baron's fiend lab. The beasts were a combination of Belhemoths and Ruby Dragon, with some random properties of other fiends thrown in. All in all the two beasts were night unbeatable. This was until both Ethan and Bastian had been pushed beyond their limits. Ethan was the first to reach Trance. Kuja had watched as his hair went from black to white and his entire body began to glow with a red aura. His skin had gone from brown to a bright orange color and his eyes went from brown to red.

Even in Trance, he was still having trouble fighting the two fiends, Bastian wasn't much help as he'd been incapacitated early in the fight. That was until he too reached his breaking point. One of the monsters had him pinned to the ground with its monstrous foot and was blasting Ethan with lightning. The other fiend had been struggling with Ethan. In an explosion of power and a brilliant flash of light, Bastian had gone into Trance. His hair was a dark blue and his skin was glowing white. The sword that was in his hand was surrounded in white energy and he almost effortlessly dispatched the fiend that had been trampling him. Now with only one fiend to deal with, Ethan made short work of it by blasting it with a beam of light from his spear. After the fiends were gone, the two had tried to blast their way out of the castle. Some soldiers had been stupid enough to try and stop them, and there was nothing left of those soldiers once they got within ten feet of the two men. Kuja had stepped in at this point, and it had taken quite a bit of his power to subdue them. It was clear that if he'd fought them all at once it would have been a short battle if they all achieved Trance.

Now there were only three people left from the lafa tree that he hadn't seen go into Trance. He'd told Antym that he wouldn't bother with Andrea, so he left her alone. Potter hadn't arrived yet, but he'd felt something change in the connection he shared with him some time

ago, he was almost certain that it was because he'd gone into Trance as well.

"Well Sheyna, it's time we awakened your true potential." said Kuja

"Go to hell." said Sheyna bitterly

"Must we do this every single time." said Kuja "I had thought your will would be broken by now. You barely remember who you used to be, yet you still fight me. And frankly, I'm tired of it."

"Going to use the Cruciatus again?" asked Sheyna "You can't make me follow your orders forever, no matter how much pain you make me feel."

"I am aware of this." said Kuja "Which is why, I'm going to have to take drastic measures."

He began to walk over to the raven haired girl. He was mildly surprised when he saw a ball of blue fire come hurtling towards him. He quickly dodged it and grabbed Sheyna by her neck.

"It's a shame I have to do this, but I suppose it will be for the best in the long run." he said to her.

He sent a surge of magic through her body and she started to scream involuntarily. Sheyna grabbed her head and collapsed to the floor. Kuja smiled at the pain he was causing, it was like music to his ears. He only regretted that he'd have to start from scratch with his puppet once the process was over. She 'd have no recollection of her past or how to control her powers, it was really going to take some work, but she wouldn't have that annoying tendency to disobey orders anymore.

There was a knock at his chamber's door. He answered it and was surprised to see the Emperor of Baron standing there. The man had long red hair, almost down to his waist. He wore a robe of midnight blue and had a golden crown on his head. Strapped at his side was a vicious looking curved sword with a serrated blade. The man's eyes were a cold black and he wore an expression which said he accepted nothing but utter seriousness.

“Kuja.” he said in greeting. “I am taking half the soldiers here to Spira, there’ve been some problems with the rebels there, so I’m going to handle it personally. The sorceress has returned to her own castle, and I believe she took the prisoners you brought with her.”

“No disrespect you excellence.” said Kuja “But why does this concern me?”

“You have become one of my most trusted advisors.” said the emperor “It was because of you that we managed to stay a few steps ahead of Strife and your knowledge of the ancient relics has given my men the edge they needed. That is why I’m leaving you in charge.”

“Surely your son would be a better choice.” said Kuja, not wanting to seem too eager in running the castle.

“He will be accompanying me.” said the emperor “I’ll be leaving within the hour, and we’ll discuss how to deal with Strife when I return.”

“I understand you Emperor Zamus.” said Kuja

“I trust that there will be no trouble while I’m gone.” said Zamus

“None my lord.” said Kuja, playing the obedient subordinate and bowing deeply.

Zamus nodded and took his leave from Kuja’s quarters. The mage was greatly amused by the emperor’s trust in him. The man had no idea he was playing both sides. Strife at least recognized him for what he was, but that didn’t mean they stopped taking his advice or his information about Eshar technology. Zamus however, simply let him command his field troops and get access to any part of the castle. It hadn’t even taken an Imperius Curse to get him to do it either. After Kuja had provided him with the Dark Knight and Paladin enhancement spheres, the man had been literally eating out of his hand. Today was starting to look a lot better.

...

Harry looked at the ominous castle in the distance. He knew it would take a well thought out plan in order to get his friends out of there, but based on what he'd seen in the last two days of scouting the place, nothing short of a well trained army could hope to infiltrate the castle. The only entrance was the main gate, as far as he'd been able to tell, and he knew he couldn't wait too much longer to make his move, who knew what they were doing to his friends in there.

Suddenly a wall in the side of the castle slid away, and out of it came a gigantic airship. Harry almost got lost in awe with looking at the great ship, but he caught himself, instead looking at the open hanger and realizing that this was a perfect chance to get in. He quickly became invisible and quickly made his way through the open doors. A few more ships flew over him as he crept into the hanger. Several soldiers were walking around aimlessly. The doors had only been closed for a few minutes when a klaxon suddenly sounded in the hanger.

"Intruder!" yelled one of the guards, an eerie blue light surged through the hanger, suddenly revealing Harry's position.

"Get to the west tower in twenty minutes, Potter." said Kuja into his mind. "One second too late and its goodbye Sheyna."

"Bastard" cursed Harry.

The soldiers had surrounded him. A few soldiers, some in black armor others in white, walked to the front of the crowd.

"Drop your weapon!" ordered one of the white armored Paladins.

"No." said Harry simply

One of the black armored dark knights thrust his sword toward Harry, sending a wave of dark magic at the wizard. Harry quickly ducked and the beam slammed into some paladins standing behind him. Angry cries came from all around as the men watched their comrades be consumed by the dark magic. Harry knew he couldn't waste time, so he took advantage of the men's distracted state.

“Accio Weapons and Armor!” He shouted. The effect was instant. Everyone wearing armor was suddenly jerked through the air and towards Harry. The weapons too came zooming toward him. He waved his right hand in a circle, causing all the summoned objects to stop in mid air, then making them slowly whirl around. Soon the room was filled with cries of pain and horror as the maelstrom of objects picked up speed. Harry took his other hand and began to gather a Thundaga spell. When he was satisfied with the results he cast the spell on the revolving weapons and armor. The effect was instant. Lightning forked all through the hanger, strengthened by the metal all around. After only thirty seconds, the only sound that could be heard in the room was the sound of crackling electricity.

Harry dissipated the spell and the clang of weapons and thuds of bodies sounded all around. Harry didn’t dally in the hanger. He cast Haste on himself and made his way through the doors at the other end of the castle.

“Point me, west tower.” said Harry as he cast the ‘point me’ charm. A silver arrow materialized in the air and pointed toward the right passageway. Harry took it and continued until he found a fork in the corridor. Standing in the intersection was a large Iron Giant. Its head was almost touching the twenty-foot high ceiling and its sword was almost twice as big as a normal Iron Giant sword. It was also in the shape of an ‘S’ making it twice as deadly should it come in contact with flesh.

Harry didn’t have time to deal with the fiend. He cast the ‘Point me’ spell again and this time it told him to keep straight. He reinforced his haste spell and ran toward the Iron Giant at blinding speed. He drew his gunblade and slashed the creature’s legs as he ran by it. He didn’t even bother looking back, but he heard the ‘clang’ sound as the armor that made up the giant fiend hit the stone floor.

He continued in this way for some time, killing any random fiend or soldier as he went. It stayed like that until he reached the courtyard with ten minutes remaining. When he stepped out into the open air, the corridors all around him shut, leaving him trapped. He heard a ‘whooshing’ sound to his left, and looked over just in time to see a humanoid fiend land on the ground. The creature was red skinned

and had a vague resemblance to a man, its ears were pointed and it had large reptilian wings and a serpentine tail. It had two large fangs on its top and bottom jaw, which Harry could see clearly thanks to its mouth being partially open. Its mouth and claws dripped with a purple substance that Harry knew was poison.

“You go no further.” the thing said in a gurgling voice.

Harry gave the thing a pitying look before charging forward and cleaving the thing in two. He turned around, and was shocked to see the two halves of the monster regenerate into two separate monsters.

“Uh-oh” he thought to himself. If he didn’t find a way to kill these things properly, it would likely mean that he wasn’t going to make it to Kuja in time, and that was not an option.

“Avada Kadavra!” said Harry, casting the killing curse at one of the monsters. The beast dodged it and both of them charged at Harry. The wizard blasted one of them with the killing curse, but he then had to fend the other one off with his sword. He cut off part of the creature’s arm, which it quickly regenerated. Then the severed forearm turned into a brand new creature. Harry cast the killing curse again, but again the creature dodged. Harry was starting to get frustrated with the resilience of the weak creatures. He realized belatedly that Kuja had set up this particular creature on purpose. It was definitely keeping Harry occupied.

The two creatures ran at Harry at the same time, and this time the wizard blasted them both with the killing curse. Now with the creatures out of the way, all he needed to do was find a way back into the corridors.

“Point me, west tower.” he said again, using the ‘point me’ spell. This time the arrow pointed upwards and to his left. He looked that way and saw a large tower looming up into the heavens. He jumped onto the courtyard wall and headed across the roof toward the tower. When he reached the structure he blasted a hole through the wall and made his way inside.

He used the 'point me' spell again, this time zeroing in on Kuja. The arrow pointed upward, so Harry followed the spiraling staircase in that direction. He came to an elaborately decorated door and kicked it open.

"Such violence." said Kuja, but Harry detected a great deal of Voldemort in his voice this time. "Just like a Gryffindor."

Harry kept one eye on Kuja as the other scanned the room, he saw Sheyna lying on a pile of furs in one corner of the room, seeing her cast aside like a useless toy made Harry's blood boil.

"What did you do to her?" he asked in a dangerously quiet voice.

"She's unharmed, for now." said Kuja

"Where are the others?" asked Harry

"Gone" said Kuja "They put up too much of a fight, and the sorceress has them now."

"Let Sheyna go." said Harry, he knew that Kuja wouldn't listen, but he also knew that both Kuja and Voldemort loved to talk, and that was exactly what he wanted Kuja to do while he did a scan of his mind with Legilimancy. He had to be very subtle, or Kuja would pick up his presence inside his mind.

"I can't do that." said Kuja. "She's much too valuable."

Harry had scanned his latest memories and knew what was going on, Kuja was doing something to Sheyna by steadily pouring magic into the nanomachines inside her body. Whatever it was doing, it was causing her to writhe in pain on the floor.

...

The two mages stood facing each other in Kuja's private quarters inside Baron Castle. Kuja was still pouring his power into the nanomachines inside Sheyna's body, making her writhe in pain with each passing second. Harry was beside himself with rage and his

eyes were literally burning with green fury. If Kuja was intimidated by this, he didn't show it.

"So here we are." said Kuja, smirking. "I knew using your friends as bait would bring you running."

"I couldn't save the others." said Harry "But you will let her go."

"I don't think so." said Kuja "She's much too important for that. She hasn't conceived an heir yet, the emperor needs to have a Lunarian heir to restore the castle to its former glory and then its secrets and the Dark Eidolon underneath shall be mine for the taking."

"So that's what you're after." said Harry biting "An Eidolon to make yourself stronger?"

"That's part of it." said Kuja "Although I'm afraid your usefulness has ended."

To illustrate his point, Kuja gathered a massive flare spell in both hands and aimed it right at Harry's chest. The wizard easily dodged the spell, but was unprepared for Kuja to drive his elbow into the back of his head. He tumbled over the floor and was soon met with Kuja's boot slamming into his unguarded stomach. The blow knocked the wind out of him, but he quickly recovered. By the time Kuja went to punch him in the face, Harry grabbed the mage's hand and quickly sprung back to his feet.

The momentum from him standing caused Kuja to be pulled down and gave Harry the chance to grab his gunblade and put it right to the mage's neck.

"Now die." said Harry preparing to push the sharp edge of the blade into Kuja's neck. Before he could do so however, he was flung off of Kuja by a wave of pure magical force.

"I'm through playing with you." said Kuja "You won't be leaving this fight alive." Kuja began to gather his magic, and Harry could tell he was using it to boost his natural abilities. Harry started to do the same, increasing his strength and speed. Suddenly, Kuja charged back at

him, wielding a blade forged of white energy. Harry brought his gunblade up to block it and then countered with an attack of his own. The two traded blows like this for some time, until Kuja suddenly jumped backwards and cast a series of bone breaking curses at Harry's head. The wizard flipped to the side in order to avoid the deadly spells and cast a string of Explosion curses in retaliation. Kuja merely conjured a barrier and let the spells thud harmlessly against it.

Harry used the opening made by his counterattack to take the advantage. He rushed at Kuja to take the offensive. He ran forward, closing the distance between himself and his enemy in seconds. He started attacking Kuja with everything he had. The mage barely had enough time to conjure a barrier to block Harry's blows. Kuja began to gather energy in his hands behind the barrier, forcing Harry to quickly back away. Kuja released the Flare spell he'd been casting and aimed it right at Harry. It happened so fast that Harry took the spell full force.

He winced at the intense pain running through his body as it was burned by the massive force of the spell. A lesser man would have been nothing but ashes by the time the spell ended, Harry however, only suffered second degree burns from the spell. He quickly cast a Regen spell on himself, greatly accelerating his healing capabilities and requiring far less energy than a Cura or Curaga spell. The smoke from the Flare still hadn't cleared and Harry took the time to cast a Haste spell on himself.

It was a good thing he'd don't this, as a barrage of Killing Curses was heading right for his position. He quickly moved out of the way and landed right behind Kuja. Before the mage could turn around, Harry slashed him with his sword, cutting a deep gash across the mage's back, but unfortunately not severing the spinal cord. The blow did however bring Kuja to his knees. Harry raised his sword, preparing to deliver a final blow, but Kuja was one step ahead and apparated a few yards away. He quickly cast a Curaga on himself and glared at Harry.

"I see you aren't used to fighting someone on your level." said Harry somewhat smugly.

“Your power is impressive.” said Kuja “The others didn’t give me nearly this much trouble, even when some of them went into Trance.”

“I seem to remember them almost killing you.” said Harry, recalling some of what he’d seen in his brief scan of Kuja’s memories.

“Looks can be deceiving.” said Kuja “I had to let them think they were getting somewhere, it made it all the more fun when I snatched victory from their desperate hands.”

“You’re a sick bastard.” said Harry “And when I’m through with you, I’m going to the Sorceress’s castle to get them out.”

“You won’t be going anywhere., and what about your dear Sheyna?” said Kuja mockingly. “If you kill me the backwash of magic will destroy her.”

“Your bluffing.” said Harry

“Maybe.” said Kuja “But are you really willing to risk it.”

The question was valid, and truthfully Harry didn’t know if he would go through with it. On the one hand, if he did kill Kuja it would be the end of a major worry, on the other that action could cause Sheyna to die, and even though she’d been less than friendly lately, it hadn’t been her fault, and he owed her a great deal. He couldn’t let her die, but he couldn’t let Kuja know this.

“I’ll do what I have to do.” said Harry calmly but the conviction was clear in his voice.

“The clock is ticking.” said Kuja “I’m pouring my magic into the nanomachines bit by bit. Soon it will be too late to save her.”

“I’ll have to hurry up then.” said Harry pouring all the energy he’d been gathering while they were talking into one Holy spell. A huge ball of white energy burst forth between his hands, he released the gigantic ball of energy and it enveloped Kuja. Harry smirked in satisfaction as he heard the mage cry out in agony from the powerful spell. He was sure that Kuja had been at least greatly injured by that

attack, so it surprised him when a large ice spike came hurling at him from behind.

He only managed to avoid a fatal injury by dodging. Instead of goring him through the middle, the spike nearly blasted his left arm off. The cut was so deep that Harry had to literally hold the wound together. He turned to see a panting Kuja holding his hand up, frost coating his singed silver glove. The mage's black armor was melted in several places, and the cape that trailed behind him was completely gone. His hair looked considerably shorter as well, only hanging just below his shoulders and having singed ends. He sported several burns, all severe, along his entire body.

Harry's Regen spell had repaired his arm enough for him to use it again, but the pain was still there, as was a sizable wound. He charged at Kuja, not wanting to give him any chance to heal. The mage brought out his energy sword again to meet Harry's gunblade. The two began to clash in earnest. Each one gaining momentary advantages and scoring glancing blows on their opponent. They pushed each other to every corner of the room, and when they were in front of the large window, Harry had an idea.

Harry feinted with a lunge to the right and Kuja took the bait, aiming his saber at Harry's exposed left side. When Harry saw this, he raised his free hand and cast an Aero spell, causing a powerful gust of wind to blow from his hand and fling Kuja backward, toward the window. Kuja's momentum caused the window to break and the mage disappeared into the dark night sky beyond. Harry quickly followed, jumping out of the now broken window. He knew he was near the castle wall and summoned some of the loose bricks turning them into large granite spikes in mid air and redirecting them towards Kuja's general direction.

Satisfied that he'd brought up a suitable distraction for the mage, Harry desperately tried to figure out a solution to his current problem, how to stop himself from slamming into the hard ground below. He focused on his magic, willing it to float him in the air. He'd tried this several times before, but had never actually attempted it in combat. He knew its advantages, as he'd seen Grindlewald use it several times. He levitated himself to the top of the castle and looked around

for signs of Kuja, at the same time, he extended his Legilimancy outwards in an attempt to sense any hostile or well guarded minds.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a flash of purple and at the same time, felt a wave of magic coursing through the air. His Legilimancy told him that there was a well guarded and twisted mind somewhere in that direction, and he knew that that was where Kuja was. The incoming spell was too large to dodge effectively, so Harry brought up his Devine Guard to fend off the blow. The golden sphere surrounded him just in time to take the dark purple wave. The spell then separated into seven black balls and surrounded his shield. Harry had an eerie feeling he knew what was about to happen, and in a matter of seconds he was proved right.

The balls began to spin around him, creating a column of purple energy around him. Harry struggled to maintain the shield, knowing that if he let it drop, it could very well mean his demise. He put everything he had into holding the shield, and soon it was over. Harry began to sink to the ground, unable to hold himself in the air any longer. He landed clumsily on the castle roof, barely able to keep his footing.

“Looks like blocking that took something out of you.” said Kuja smugly from his right.

Harry turned to see the mage smirking at him, it seemed he'd healed himself once more and only sported faint marks where he'd been burned. His hair and clothes however, were still singed and melted.

“I like to call that, Dark Holy.” he continued “Do you like it?”

“I've seen better.” said Harry. He used some of the little magic he had left to cast Flare spell from his stock of junctioned spells. It was nowhere near as strong as one of his personal spells, but Kuja did have to put up a Reflect spell in order to keep it from damaging him.

The spell came speeding back to Harry with even more power than before. Kuja had added some of his own magic to the spell when it hit his Reflect shield. Harry brought up a Reflect of his own, forcing himself to use more power than he thought he could use. The spell

fought against his attempts to reverse it, but he managed to do it, and the spell went hurling back at Kuja, twice as fast and twice as strong as it was before. The mage barely reinforced his shield in time, but he managed to send the spell hurtling back at Harry, this time even stronger.

Harry leapt backwards several yards, trying to put some distance between himself and the massive Flare spell. He brought both hands in front of him, concentrating his Reflect spell to form between them. The spell slammed into the barrier, and Harry again forced it back. He began to levitate himself again, forcing himself to block out the exhaustion he was beginning to feel from using so much excessive magic. Kuja sent the spell hurtling back at Harry, and the wizard again prepared the block the now massive spell.

The ball of burning magic had grown in size from that of a beach ball to that of a gigantic wrecking ball. Harry reinforced his Reflect spell in order to send the magic back at Kuja. This time he could feel the heat from the spell. It felt like he was right inside a raging inferno, and the spell hadn't even hit him yet. He screamed in defiance and frustration as he felt his shield begin to yield, he couldn't let this happen, if he died here there would be no one to save Andrea and the others from Sorceress Mia and Sheyna would probably be forced into being Baron's slave.

He felt a wave of power come rushing from deep within him and he could feel the underlying energy that he recognized as Trance. He knew that all he needed was to give himself a push and he'd cross the threshold into that vast stream of power, however unlike in his fight with Zero, he was unwilling to unleash that much power at once, if he were to lose control there was no telling what the consequences would be. So instead he let the familiar energies of his Limit Break surge through him. The extra boost of Power was all he needed to blast the spell back at Kuja, causing it to grow twice as large again.

The spell was so large that Harry was certain it could destroy half the castle if it hit them. He didn't know if Kuja could blast the spell back at him or not, but he wasn't going to give him the chance. He gripped his gunblade tightly and let his energy flow into it. The blade began to

glow with a bright golden light as Harry's energies began coursing through it. He pushed himself toward where he knew Kuja to be, he passed right through the gigantic Flare ball, not receiving any damage from it whatsoever. He saw Kuja's eyes widen in surprise at his appearance and it was all he could do to keep the smirk off of his face. He brought his blade down onto Kuja's barrier, destroying it and continuing downward. Kuja leapt backwards, avoiding a fatal blow from the gunblade, but unprepared for the explosive power that radiated from the blade as it struck the ground. He was sent tumbling over the hard marble of the castle roof and slowly stood to his feet. He briefly wondered why Harry hadn't pressed the advantage when he felt searing heat begin to burn his body.

He looked up just in time to see the gigantic Flare ball come crashing on top of him. Harry watched in satisfaction as his Flare spell began to destroy both Kuja and the castle. Suddenly he felt something grab him and pull him toward the burning ball of magic. It didn't take him long to realize that Kuja had cast a Summoning Charm on him and was pulling him towards the same fiery doom as he was experiencing. Harry tried to fight the pull of the magic, but it was no use. He gathered a weak defensive barrier around himself, but it didn't do much good.

The spell burned more than anything he'd ever felt before. The pain made him wish for the Cruciatus curse and soon he felt blackness begin to overtake him. He knew that this would be the end. Just before he felt the walls of death close in on him, he felt something stirring within him, and felt a wave of comfort and healing wash over him.

"You need not fear this spell while I am your junction." said the rumbling voice of Zero and Harry knew that the great dragon had made it so the spell healed him.

As the spell ended and smoke filled the air, Harry pulled himself shakily to his feet. He may not be physically hurt or exhausted anymore, but he was quite lightheaded from the use of so much magic. Harry caught a glimpse of the West tower through the smoke and was relieved to see that it was still standing. He'd taken the battle away from there so Sheyna would have less chance of getting hurt, it

would be a terrible blow to him if something happened to her because of his actions or lack thereof during this fight.

He reached out with his Legilimancy to locate Kuja. He had a nasty feeling that somehow the mage had survived that attack, and he couldn't afford to be caught off guard. He felt a presence not too far away from him and started heading toward it. He soon found the source of the feeling he'd been getting. Kuja was slowly rising from the rubble, his eyes glowing with white fury. His armor was melted to his skin in places and he sported several long gashes over his body. His forehead was bleeding profusely and his left shoulder looked like it had been shattered, but still he rose from the rubble and started to float high into the air.

"I won't let you win, Potter." he yelled down to Harry "You're proving to be far more resilient than I gave you credit for. I was going to try and force you into Trance and see the extent of your power, but I know now that that would be a mistake. That's why it's time for you to die.'

Kuja began to gather energy of all colors into his hands. There were blue, purple, white, black, red and pink beams of energy, all swirling around in both Kuja's hands. He brought them up over his head and created a massive ball of magic. Harry saw that the surroundings were all glowing orange and yellow with the intensity of Kuja's spell, and he knew he had to do something.

"Prepare yourself boy." said Kuja "This is the true power of Ultima!"

Bolts of energy began to rain from the sky all around Harry, causing explosions where they hit. Soon the sky was torn asunder as the bolts began to pour down like rain. Kuja tossed the ball into the air, and it seemed that he disappeared as if he'd summoned something. Harry squared himself to take the full brunt of the spell. The energy bolts were raining down, burning his skin and turning his clothes into little more than burnt rags. The ball that Kuja had thrown into the air began to come back down towards Harry, splitting halfway toward him and turning into a large beam of energy. Harry braced himself as the beam pounded into him, causing a devastating explosion which

destroyed even more of the castle and forming a humongous crater one hundred and fifty feet deep.

Kuja reappeared and looked over the devastation with a satisfied smile on his face. He looked into the smoking crater and waved his hands to clear away the rising vapor. He saw Harry's broken and burnt body laying face down at the bottom of the crater. The wizard wasn't moving and Kuja couldn't tell from this far away weather or not he was still breathing. It would have been simple to just destroy the body with a Firaga or Thundaga spell, but Kuja was so exhausted he could barely levitate himself to the ground and to the bottom of the crater. He looked down at Harry and saw that he was, in fact, still breathing.

"Why won't you die." said Kuja

Harry let out a bitter chuckle escape his throat, the sound came out raspy and weak sounding, but he didn't care. "You're just out of your league." he responded.

"Out of my league?" said Kuja thoughtfully "If I see things correctly, you're the one on the ground, unable to move. While I'm still standing."

"Then finish me off." said Harry. "Unless you don't think you have the strength to kill someone who can't even move."

"I'll enjoy shutting that insolent mouth of yours permanently." said Kuja "Say hello to your parents for me." He raised his left hand and thrust it forward with a stabbing motion. "Avada Kadavra!"

"Terra Flare." said Harry. before rolling out of the way and springing to his feet. He ached all over and he was sustaining more than his fair share of broken bones. His ribs were all but shattered, and he thought he may have even punctured a lung. Both his legs had fractures and his right arm was broken in five different places. The only thing holding him up was his own magic, and that was only barely.

"So there is some fight in you." said Kuja

Harry didn't respond. Instead he concentrated on what he was doing. The sky began to cloud over and thunder rumbled in the distance. Kuja noticed this and looked at Harry curiously.

"A storm spell, Potter?" he asked incredulously. "I expected better from you."

Again Harry didn't respond, and this only served to raise Kuja's ire. He ran at Harry, using his newly formed energy saber as his weapon of choice. Harry was barely able to bring his gunblade up to block the attacks, and was cut several times by his inability to guard properly. Kuja was growing tired as well, and his blows became more sloppy and less accurate as time progressed. Soon he was missing Harry altogether, but the wizard couldn't capitalize because he too was almost to his limit.

The sky split open and a large ring formed within the clouds, allowing moonlight to pour down upon the entire castle. Kuja looked from the newly opened ring in the clouds and Harry. Something seemed to click in his mind as he realized what Harry was about to do.

"You wouldn't!" he yelled over the wind that had picked up in the last few seconds.

Harry didn't answer, his mind was focused on Zero. The large silver dragon had gotten into position, high above the planet's atmosphere. He was gathering energy into his mouth and was preparing to release it.

"It'll destroy everything around here, including the west tower!" Kuja yelled again, getting desperate.

Harry didn't respond, knowing that Kuja could very well be right, but unwilling to stop now that he'd started.

"You're not leaving me a choice now." said Kuja. He used what little remaining energy he had and gathered a concentrated ball of it into his hands. "You see this, Potter? If you let the dragon release that

spell, I'll send this right into Sheyna's body. She'll die a horrible and painful death, and it'll be all your fault, is that what you want?"

Harry felt a stab in his chest as he knew the words to be true, but it was too late to stop now. Zero had finished gathering his Terra Flare attack and released it. Harry disappeared just as a gigantic beam of white and blue energy came hurtling towards the castle, with Kuja set right in the center of its destination. The force of the beam completely leveled the rest of the castle, including the west tower. Harry watched as Kuja tried to fight off the affects of the beam, but soon the mage was brought down and was enveloped in a wave of power. A second later Harry heard the sound of someone apparating and knew that Kuja had somehow managed to survive.

As the smoke began to clear, Harry reappeared at the center of the once glorious castle of Baron. There was nothing remaining, but a pile of smoking rubble. He rushed toward the remnants of the west tower, hoping against hope that Sheyna was alright.

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A/N: I figured I would try and get this out today. I am still out of town, so I'm glad I e-mailed this to myself . I know that there are some errors, but I hope they can be overlooked until I get a chance to edit this properly. Hope you guys enjoyed it, please let me know what you think.

Taking Steps

Harry ran as fast as he could to the ruined section of the castle that was once the west tower. He ignored the fatigue he felt and began moving the rubble away with magic. He dug through the rubble for what seemed like hours, but was only a few minutes, when he finally found Sheyna. She wasn't moving as she had been before, and Harry didn't know whether that was good or bad. The last time she'd been shuddering with pain every few minutes, but since she wasn't moving she was either unconscious or dead.

Casting a few diagnostic charms on her he found, much to his great relief, that she was alive. However, she had several broken ribs and one of her legs appeared to have been crushed quite thoroughly. His diagnostic charms also revealed something far more disturbing. Something had been done to her brain, what Harry didn't know, but it seemed to have altered it in some way.

Harry carefully levitated her out of the rubble and away from the ruins of the castle. He conjured a cot and gently lowered her onto it. He then proceeded to heal the various physical wounds that she'd suffered. Thanks to the Curaga spell this didn't take nearly as long as it would have otherwise. After he'd healed her he proceeded to revive her with the 'enervate' spell, but he stopped himself. If he revived her now and she was still influenced by Kuja it would be harder to snap her out of it later.

"Enter her mind and find out what's wrong then." said Seth

"That's what I was going to do." said Harry

He placed a hand on her temple and sent out a small bit of his magic into her mind. As he slowly began to enter into her mind he began to see a black mist everywhere. When he finally got all the way inside he found that her mind was a complete wreck. This wasn't surprising, considering that most people who never studied Occlumency had disorganized minds. But what was shocking was the black mist that seemed to be moving around and making the mess much worse. The mist was devouring several balls of blue light that Harry assumed were Sheyna's memories.

He couldn't let this go on much longer. Already it looked like the mist had done a thorough job in devouring her memories, it looked like there should be at least twice as many as there were now. Harry felt his anger surge as he saw the mist swallow another memory. This wasn't right, Kuja's fight was with him, not Sheyna, but just like Voldemort, he had to target those close to Harry in order to hurt him.

Harry thrust out with his magic, stopping the mist from claiming another memory. He then began to pull the dark cloud toward him, making its full attention come to him. He felt the cloud resisting his hold on it, but he wasn't daunted, he began to force the cloud into one concentrated ball. Soon he had it down to the size of a snitch, which was quite impressive since it had been covering much of the expanse of Sheyna's mind. He tried to simply obliterate the ball of mist, but it was so dense that it simply absorbed any direct attack against it, Harry could only hope to contain it and hope for the best. He placed the ball into a box and then put several locks and runes on the box to contain what he'd put inside. This would hold for now, but when Sheyna recovered he was going to have to try and teach her Occlumency. That way she could organize her own mind and hopefully protect the memories she had left.

Harry looked around her mind again, now that the black mist was gone, and he was horrified to see another cloud of mist beginning to form. This cloud was red, and instead of devouring memories, it was creating new ones. At first Harry thought this might have been something Sheyna was subconsciously doing, so he went up to one of the new memories in order to view it.

He was in a forest with someone. That person had long silver hair and something about that person looked familiar to him. He was feeling an aura of safety with this person, but to him it seemed wrong. 'Safe' was the last thing he should be feeling when around this man.

"I'm only asking you to do one thing in exchange for me saving you."
said the man

“What’s that?” he said, but his voice was young, and it was female. He mentally sighed at the weirdness of viewing other people’s memories.

“I’ve always wanted a daughter.” said the man “and with your parents dead I don’t see why you can’t be my daughter.”

“No one wants me.” said Sheyna

Harry hurriedly pulled out of the memory and then proceeded to destroy it. He knew know exactly what Kuja was trying to do and he wasn’t going to let him do it. He saw that the memories from the red cloud were purple in color, he proceeded to obliterate any purple memory he came across before taking the red cloud and sealing it in much the same way as he had the black one. Not wanting to take anymore chances, he began placing mental wards around the remaining memories. These wouldn’t last too long, but they’d hopefully last until Sheyna was at least proficient enough to organize her own memories.

Harry pulled out of her mind and proceeded to revive her. As soon as the spell hit her she opened her eyes and sat up straight. She looked around wildly and suddenly grabbed her head in both hands. She let out an anguished moan.

“Sheyna?” Harry asked worriedly

She snapped her head in his direction with a look of panic and confusion on her face.

“What am I doing here? Why am I on the ground? Why does my head hurt so much? Who the hell are...” she paused in her questioning and grabbed her head once more. Then suddenly she looked up at Harry and yelled out. “Answer my damn questions Harry!”

Harry was a little taken aback by the sudden change in demeanor, none the less he decided to tread lightly and venture at answering her questions. But before he could do that, he needed to calm her down.

“Alright Sheyna, I’ll answer you.” he told her gently.

"Don't talk to me like I'm some lost little girl." she spat at him.

"First you need to calm down." said Harry adopting an authoritative tone.

"Calm down." said Sheyna, suddenly very calm. "You want me to calm down." her voice began to rise again. "The last thing I remember is going to sleep in Alexandria, then I have a vague notion of pain, a lot of it and Kuja. And then I wake up and my head is throbbing like it's been hit with a hammer too many times and you won't even answer my questions and then you tell me TO CALM DOWN!"

She was breathing very heavily now and she was trembling all over, Harry didn't know what kind of side effects all that tampering with her mind had done, so he did the only thing he could think of to calm her down, a calming charm.

Sheyna started to relax and Harry was about to begin talking when Sheyna's face suddenly became anxious.

"You did something to me." it was not a question more as an accusation.

"It was a calming charm, I need to explain a lot of things to you and you need to be calm for me to do it." explained Harry

"Take it off me." she ordered him

"I can't do that." said Harry

"Do it!" she said again "I don't want my emotions controlled."

"Just let the charm do its work, it's not going to hurt you." said Harry

"Undo it!" She said getting angry

"Well it obviously isn't working now anyway." said Harry, he waved his hand and released the calming charm, which didn't have any visible effects. There, it's off."

she didn't respond to him, instead she tried to stand, but only managed to take a couple of steps before she began to topple over. Harry reflexively sprang forward and caught her before she could hit the ground.

"Take it easy, Sheyna." said Harry consolingly. "I only want to help you."

"I don't need help." said Sheyna

"Man her head is really screwed up." said Seth

"What the hell am I supposed to do?" Harry questioned the guardian

"How should I know?" asked Seth

"Aren't you guys supposed to have great wisdom or something?" said Harry mentally

"Wisdom doesn't mean we know everything." said Seth

"Sheyna just try to relax and think clearly for a minute." said Harry

"I am thinking just fine." said Sheyna stubbornly

"No you're not." said Harry "A lot happened to you and I'm not even sure about what a lot of it did to you, so let me help you."

"Why do you care?" asked Sheyna "You shouldn't want to help me after what I've done."

"You remember?" asked Harry

"Bits and pieces." said Sheyna softly "I don't know exactly what happened, but I'm starting to see the basic outline of it."

"It wasn't your fault." said Harry

"The others won't think so." said Sheyna

"They can think what they want." said Harry "If they know what really happened I'm sure they won't hold it against you."

"You don't know that." she told him

"You're right, I don't." said Harry "But I trust all of them and if they have a problem with you, they can take it up with me."

"I'm not worth all that." said Sheyna

"Yes you are." said Harry adamantly "Why would you think that?"

"I'm just not cut out for all this." said Sheyna "I'm not a SeeD like the others and I'm not good with magic like you are, what do I have to offer? I can't help you beat Kuja, so what good am I to you?"

"First of all, I don't care that you aren't a SeeD or that you're not a witch either." said Harry "Second of all, you've saved us on several occasions or can't you remember?"

"I..." she scrunched up her face in concentration, trying to remember what Harry was talking about. Harry could tell she was trying very hard to remember, but he had a feeling that she couldn't. His suspicions were confirmed when she let out a defeated sigh and hung her head. "I can't remember many battles. I know there were a lot, but I can't remember them. The only one that stands out is fighting that thing at Bessaid Garden."

"Alright." said Harry "I'd like to talk about this more, but we need to get out of here."

"Why?" said Sheyna

"Look over there." said Harry, pointing to the ruined castle in the distance.

"What happened to that castle?" she asked astonished

“Umm...I kind of...leveled it.” said Harry a bit sheepishly “Well Zero leveled it, but I helped.”

“Who’s Zero?” she asked

“He’s my other GF.” said Harry “I got him after my little jaunt into the Lifestream.”

“Lifestream....” said Sheyna, trying to remember something again

“Don’t try to remember right now.” said Harry “We need to go before whoever left the castle earlier comes back.”

Harry led her away from the ruined castle and into the forest surrounding the clearing. They walked in a companionable silence for some time. After a while, Harry thought a lot during that time. He didn’t know how to deal with Sheyna, her mood swings were very frustrating and the contradicting responses only confused him, which in turn irritated him further. He mentally cursed Kuja several times while thinking of new inventive ways to hurt the bastard that had caused this in the first place. He eventually resolved to simply play it by ear and do whatever he thought was best at the time. Not a particularly solid plan, but the only one that seemed logical to use in this situation.

Sheyna started to look unsteady on her feet. Harry decided that it would be safe to stop for the night, and called her to a halt.

“Let’s sleep here.” said Harry.

“Alright.” said Sheyna “But I don’t see any supplies on you, we’re sleeping on the ground?”

“You forget who you’re dealing with.” said Harry good naturedly, he realized belatedly how she could have taken that, luckily for him the comment didn’t seem to bother her.

“Why don’t you remind me then.” she said a hint of a smile in her voice.

Harry was again confused by the sudden change, but he liked this mood better than the one from earlier.

“I can just transfigure some tents and sleeping bags, or if you’d prefer I think I’ve got a cottage in my trunk.”

“The cottage” she said

“Sure” said Harry

His trunk appeared in front of him and he was once again glad he’d read the book about accessing the sub-dimensions, the spells were great for storage of just about anything. From the trunk he pulled a metallic sphere, he made a few trees uproot themselves and move out of his way so that he had a clearing. Once that was done he placed the sphere on the ground and hit one of the buttons on the side of it. It still amazed him how these compact cottages worked. The sphere split in two and out of it came a large brown blob. The blob slowly molded itself into the shape of a house, once the outline resembled a quaint cottage, the big changes started happening. The blob began to harden and almost instantaneously the blob shimmered and it suddenly looked like a real cottage.

Harry opened the white screen door and beckoned her inside.

Once inside, they passed two doors on opposite sides of the hallway, then they passed a bathroom and headed into a well furnished sitting room which connected directly to a kitchen. Harry wasn’t exactly sure how the place got running water, or how the chairs and couches in the sitting room came into being, but he supposed it had something to do with the inner workings of the cottage’s formation.

Sheyna made herself comfortable on one of the couches and Harry headed for the door.

“I need to take care of something.” he told her “It’ll only take a couple minutes tops, will you be alright?”

“I’ll be fine, Harry.” said Sheyna

...

Harry had been gone for about five minutes, and Sheyna was thankful for the reprieve. She knew she had been hard on Harry earlier, but it was hard not to lash out at someone, she was just sorry it had to be Harry. The thing that was causing her so much distress was the absence of so many memories. She could remember facts, like how to load a gun, or what her favorite foods were. She even remembered facts about the others. Bastian snored loudly, Sophia had a weird birthmark in the small of her back. Harry was an offworlder. The odd thing was, she couldn't remember learning this information, what events lead her to come to these facts?

She did remember some things, like the conversation with her mother and finding out she was a Lunarian. Waking up in Alexandria with a pain in her neck and being thrown in prison for some outrageous murder charge. The events after that got hazy. She remembered seeing Kuja in a block of ice, then pain, then she remembered fighting a woman with blue hair and having to fight Leviathan. The battle itself was like a series of blurred images. She remembered Bastian being turned into a zombie and seeing Harry cast the Doomsday spell. The next memory was of Kuja, she couldn't recall what he'd said, but it had made her angry and then she remembered the pain again, the pain came from a spell...Crucio, if she remembered correctly.

the memory of the spell brought up two more memories, one of Harry standing over a large snake man and holding him in the 'Crucio' spell, the next was of Kuja placing the same spell on herself, she shuddered at the memory. She began trying to remember other things, things about her childhood and her parents, but it was to no avail as she drew a blank each time. Her earliest memory was of leaving Bevelle and heading to Bikinel Island to work for her father. It got hazy after that, she vaguely recalled being promoted to rig captain and getting her own place.

The next memories were of finding Harry. For some reason this memory was crystal clear. The events were easy to recall. They found the dead sandworm first then they followed a trail of dead sand lizards. They eventually found someone's arm sticking out of the sand

and when they pulled it, Harry was what they found. She remembered the time on the rig, and teaching Harry about materia and all the other forms of magic of Temprus. She even remembered that time he'd walked in on her in the shower. That particular memory made her laugh as she replayed the look on his face.

The later days of their stay on the rig were fuzzy, she knew they'd left with a delivery truck and that the truck had somehow gotten destroyed, but the specifics eluded her. The next clear memory was of Bessaid Garden, Harry had been captured, she'd tried to force her way through an army of SeeDs in order to get to the commander and demand his release, but that had only gotten her put in a cell of her own. She could recall the battle in the training grounds clearly, but the events directly before and immediately after were complete blanks.

Somehow they'd ended up going to Lucca with Ethan and Andrea and they finally made their delivery to Bastian. Harry had somehow vanished sometime later and she didn't see him again for almost a year and half. In that time Chaos Flame had been removed from Lucca, but as to how that happened she only half way remembered. She was sure that Strife had had something to do with it though. Next there was a large gap and then she remembered being in her mother's kitchen and learning about her true heritage.

After that she recalled the raid on her mother's house and the events leading to her mother's death. The events blurred again here she knew that Harry was somehow connected to whatever happened next, but how exactly she wasn't sure. She remembered them having a conversation in the engine room of an airship. She promised him that she wouldn't let him out of her sight again, and he'd simply smiled at her and thanked her.

The rest of her memories were similar to that. She could recall bits and pieces of traveling through Glacia and then a brief moment on the Strife ship, but the only prominent memory was being in the Tesakura's vine cage.

The door opened and she looked up to see Harry walk in, he sat down on the chair closest to the couch and sighed deeply.

"I just saw a bunch of airships flying toward Baron Castle." he told her "We should be safe here with the wards I put up, but when we start moving again we'll have to be careful."

She nodded to let him know she'd heard him and the room collapsed into silence.

"I'm sorry about snapping at you earlier." said Sheyna

"Don't apologize." said Harry "I don't blame you for it. You had no control over what happened to you."

"What did happen to me?" she asked "I know I did some awful things, but I don't know why or what exactly they were."

"I don't know exactly what happened to you." said Harry "But I have a vague notion as well as a few pretty good assumptions."

"Something's better than nothing." said Sheyna

"Well I assume it started in Alexandria, we were there to warn the queen about Strife's invasion and when we arrived you were still unconscious from the fight with Tesakura. Somewhere between when we arrived and when you woke up, Kuja got to you. He mentioned something about probes, so I think he used some sort of parasite in combination with magic to control you."

"So something's...in me!" she asked in a disgusted tone.

"Well, I scanned you for anything harmful and I didn't find anything," said Harry "So I think whatever it is must have been removed."

"Your not telling me everything." she said sensing his uneasiness.

"Well," said Harry carefully "It might just be inactive, a magical scan won't find anything if it isn't activated, I did an x-ray charm but that didn't show anything unusual either, or as far as I could tell anyway, I'm no healer."

"Let's just be optimistic then." said Sheyna "So whatever he did controlled me?"

"More or less." said Harry "I could tell you were fighting it though, I wanted to help you, but I didn't know what to do."

"How long did you know I was being controlled?" she asked

"I suspected something was wrong when we left Alexandria," said Harry "You just didn't seem like you. Then you started doing weird things, or saying things at odd times, and sometimes you'd just space out."

"Did anyone else notice?" she asked

"I think Andrea did, but I'm not sure what she thought was going on." said Harry

"How'd I get out of it?" she asked

"That I'm unsure of." said Harry "Kuja was doing something to you when I found you, I had to find this place after I finished my dip in the Lifestream. He said that he was going to make sure you didn't disobey him again, so I think you'd just tried to fight his control again. I fought him, and while we were fighting he said that if I killed him the magical backwash would kill you too."

"So he was bluffing?" she asked

"I don't know." said Harry

"You did kill him didn't you?" she asked, not caring that she sounded desperate

"He apparated away at the last minute." said Harry "I don't know where he is, but I don't think we'll be seeing much of him for a while."

"But he's not dead." she said somberly, she couldn't remember everything he'd done to her, but what she could recall made her both hate and fear the platinum haired man.

“He won’t hurt you again.” said Harry adamantly

“But he’s still out there somewhere, just waiting to come back.” said Sheyna

Harry rose from his chair and came over to her. He kneeled down to look he straight in the eye before saying. “As long as I live and breathe I swear he will not hurt you again.”

Sheyna didn’t know what to say, she wasn’t sure what she’d done to deserve such devotion from him, but the fact that he cared that much made her feel an odd sense of happiness and relief. “You mean that?” she questioned, wanting to alleviate any doubts.

...

Harry didn’t know what to say to that, of course he meant it, but that statement had meant a lot more than just protecting her from Kuja. He’d protect her from anyone and do everything in his power to ensure that she never had to hurt like that again. It was upon this revelation that he realized something that he’d known for a while, but had tried to ignore. He loved this woman before him, and that was a very big problem. It was obvious to him that Kuja had somehow figured this fact out before he had, that was why he’d used her instead of one of the others, that was why Harry had hesitated to act because on some level he was trying to deny that there was anything wrong. All this was mulled over in the span of a few seconds. In that time he stood up and pulled Sheyna into a tight embrace.

“I meant it, every word.” he whispered fiercely.

She returned the hug with equal vigor, leaning her head against his chest. After a few moments Harry felt something warm and wet seeping through his shirt, he realized that Sheyna was crying and using his shirt as a makeshift handkerchief, but he didn’t care. As he held her he mulled over what he was going to do next. As much as he’d like to, it wasn’t the time to pursue a relationship with her. She was just recovering from a very traumatic experience and he had

more issues than he could count. Going anywhere beyond a close friendship was asking for disaster in his opinion.

Then there was the issue of her fractured memories. He was thankful that she remembered what she did, it would have been a lot more complicated if she didn't know who he was or how to defend herself. Even still, there were a lot of her memories missing. He'd start teaching her Occlumency soon, assuming that she could learn it. He wasn't sure whether someone who wasn't a wizard or witch could learn the obscure form of magic, but Sheyna being a Lunarian should count for something. His musings were interrupted when Sheyna shifted in his arms and looked up at him.

"Thanks for that, Harry." she said sincerely

"No need to thank me." said Harry "I'll help you in any way I can, we'll get through this together."

"Do you think I'll ever get them back?" she asked

"Your mind was altered by magic" Harry explained "I'm not sure exactly what kind of magic was used, but whatever it was can be undone, we just have to figure out how."

"If you say there's a way then I believe you." said Sheyna

"I want to try and teach you something." said Harry "It should help you with your memories and keep something like this from happening again."

"When can we start?" she asked

"Tomorrow." said Harry "I haven't really had a good rest since before we went into the lafa Tree."

"What did I tell you about trying to work yourself to death?" she asked in mock chastisement

Harry couldn't help but laugh at this causing Sheyna to release him and give him a scowl of indignation

“What?” she asked

“I’m glad to have you back.” he said “You haven’t gotten in my case in a while.”

They shared a good laugh at this and soon they were in a companionable silence once again.

“Hey, Harry?” said Sheyna suddenly

“What is it?” he asked

“Didn’t you used to have two things hanging from your neck?” she asked

“Yeah,” he said examining the necklace around his neck “They’re both right here, the Sorceress crystal and the...oh bloody hell.”

...

Kuja staggered slightly as he walked, clutching the black materia tightly to his chest, as if his life depended on it, and in a way, it did. He’d managed to summon the materia just before he apparated, it seemed that Potter hadn’t thought to enchant the stone against summoning charms; that was a mistake he would soon be regretting.

Kuja pushed open the large oak doors to President Strife’s office. Upon entering, he saw Cirrus standing at the large window that overlooked the grand city expanse that stretched out beneath the Strife HQ building.

“To what do I owe the pleasure Kuja?” he asked without turning around

“I have something for you.” said the mage “This should work much better than that Ultima Materia you were going to use for your little project.”

Cirrus turned around and raised an eyebrow at Kuja's battered appearance, but nonetheless came over and took the black orb from Kuja's hand.

"Interesting." he mused "I've never seen a materia like this before."

"That's one of a kind." said Kuja "The spells within are quite powerful, even if there are only two of them."

"And what spells would those be?" asked Cirrus curiously

"Apocalypse and Doomsday" said Kuja

"And why would you give something like this to me?" asked Cirrus "I'm sure a man of your 'talents' could use this far more effectively than me."

"I have my reasons." said Kuja "Just make sure you get Astral Authority off the ground soon."

"I don't suppose that this new development has anything to do with your current condition, does it?" asked Cirrus

Kuja scowled at the man, but let the comment pass. "You could say that." he admitted

"Interesting." said Strife "I'm going to take a wild guess here and say that the Offworlder did this to you."

"You seem to be well informed." said Kuja

"You could say that." said Strife "I don't mean to cut this visit short Kuja, but I'll go along with your suggestion and I'll use this materia, but I want you to know that if this is some kind of double cross..."

"No need to worry Mr. President." said Kuja "Our goals are the same, for the most part, double crossing you wouldn't be beneficial for either of us." With that said, the mage summoned what little energy he had remaining and apparated away.

...

"He must have taken it." said Harry solemnly

"What would he want with that materia?" asked Sheyna

"Whatever it is, I'm sure it isn't good." said Harry

"Not much you can do about it now though." said Sheyna

"That's true." said Harry "I've got no idea where Kuja is and getting the others away from the sorceress is more important right now."

"Do you even know where the castle is?" asked Sheyna

"No" said Harry "I'll just do the same thing I did to find Baron Castle. Find a town and probe the mind of a few people until I get the information."

"I guess that's one way to do it." said Sheyna

"You have a better way?" he asked

"Well, no" said Sheyna "It's just the thought of you rummaging through someone else's mind without a second thought is kind of..."

"Kind of what?" asked Harry

"It just seems wrong." said Sheyna

"It's not like I don't have a good reason for doing it." said Harry, defending himself "I don't just barge into people's minds whenever I feel like it. Usually, I try and find the soldiers first, that's how I found Baron, I don't just go up to random people and...mind rape them."

"I still don't like it." said Sheyna

"Be that as it may" said Harry "I'll do what I have to do, would you rather search the entire continent aimlessly in hopes of finding it?"

“No” Sheyna said resignedly “Just don’t make it a habit alright?”

“That I can do.” said Harry

...

The next morning Harry and Sheyna compacted the cottage and prepared to search for the nearest town. Before heading out into the wilderness, Harry summoned his trunk and pulled out a pair of black pistols.

“Remember these?” asked Harry, handing the guns to Sheyna

“I’m glad I asked you to keep these.” said Sheyna “Didn’t I have another gun?”

“Well you had the machine gun you took from the Strife ship, but that and your katana got lost somewhere in the rubble of the castle. You still know how to use those don’t you?”

“I think so.” said Sheyna, she took one of the pistols and took aim at a spot on one of the trees, or at least that’s what Harry thought she was aiming at. When she fired there was an inhuman screech and a dead birdlike fiend fell from one of the higher tree branches.

“Guess you do remember how to use those.” said Harry

“What about my materia?” asked Sheyna

“Lost too” said Harry “You can use mine though, not like I need it anyway.”

“If you’re sure.” said Sheyna

“I can cast spells without it, plus I’ve got my junctions backing me up.” he assured her. He took off his bracelet with his materia and handed it to her, she put it on and once she’d checked all the materia equipped on it, the two of them started making their way toward what they hoped would be the nearest town. Little did they know that the situation was soon going to go from bad to worse.

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A/N: I'm a little late with this update, but at least I got it out. I know this is a little shorter than usual, but this was more of a filler chapter than anything. I'll have the next chapter up soon, MAYBE before next Saturday, but as always, I make no promises. Now on to another note, I'm not demanding reviews, but I do like them. Anyone who writes can tell you that a few good reviews makes them want to write more, I know a lot of times that you don't have much to say so I don't expect everyone to review every chapter, but seeing as how I have a lot of people reading this I kind of thought I'd have a few more than what I usually get, but as long as it doesn't get any worse I'll be happy, I'm actually getting a lot more than I thought I would. I'd like to let you all know that I appreciate everyone's interest in this fic, and without people reading it, I wouldn't keep writing, so thanks guys you're all great, well most of you are anyway.

The White Tower

Harry slumped down against the hard stone that he and Sheyna were using as a makeshift shelter. Their supplies had run out a while ago and none of the towns they'd found would let them in. It was a very frustrating experience for the both of them. To make matters worse, Harry had been unable to find any information about where the Sorceress' stronghold was.

Other things had been bothering him too. His magic hadn't recovered completely from the battle with Kuja as he had yet to get any decent rest. Even when he slept he was always alert and ready for anything that might happen. Thus his magic was unable to fully replenish itself, leaving him at barely half his maximum power level. The fact that there were fiends lurking around didn't help matters either. The monsters were a constant threat and some took a good deal of magic to deal with. Had Harry been alone, this would have posed a very tricky problem, but with Sheyna, even in her semi-amnesiac state, the fiends were only a minor annoyance.

Sheyna was the only good point about the whole situation. She had proved very apt at Occlumency, after a few setbacks in the beginning that is. Harry had only taught his friends what limited Occlumency he'd known at the time. What he knew now was picked up from constantly trying to block Grindewald out of his mind and whatever he'd manage to figure out in his spare time. After a great deal of frustration on both their parts, Sheyna finally mastered the basics and was on her way to restoring her mind.

Harry felt something wet hit his head and sighed tiredly. Rain was something he hadn't seen much in this world, and he supposed he was lucky, but since coming to Baron it rained almost every other day. He gestured with his hand and the boulder grew to almost five times its previous size, he then did a series of hand gestures that turned the stone into a makeshift tent. The process had only taken a few seconds, but already the rain had intensified and Harry was already soaking wet.

"I hate this rain." said Sheyna, coming back from scouting the area. "It should mask our trail though."

"Any sign of those people that were tracking us?" asked Harry "I didn't sense anyone, but you never know."

"No sign of anyone." said Sheyna "I'd still feel better if you put up some wards though."

"Was going to" said Harry "I can't believe that bitch put a bounty on our heads."

"I don't even know how she knew you were here." said Sheyna

"I turned an entire castle into rubble." said Harry "When something like that happens, people tend to notice."

"Yeah but it seems like she knew a lot about us, remember that notice we passed outside the last town?" asked Sheyna

"Oh yeah, 'Warning be on the lookout for extremely dangerous fugitives, they are armed and will not hesitate to use deadly force against anyone who cross their path. Male has wild black hair and unnaturally green eyes. Female has shoulder length black hair and light brown eyes. Both are highly skilled in magic: Approach with extreme caution. Anyone brave enough to subdue either or both individuals will be rewarded 1,000,000 GP'" said Harry, quoting the sign verbatim "I personally think I'm worth more than a million Gold Pieces. Don't even get me started on those pictures either, their composite artist really sucked."

"Maybe you should send them a better photo then" said Sheyna sarcastically "I can't believe you memorized the sign."

"Stems from memorizing all the bad press I used to gat back home." said Harry "The signs kind of remind me of that."

"I think I agree with you about the GP being too low." said Sheyna "That doesn't even equal a quarter million in Gil. I don't know why this place even used that ancient currency."

"Guess they didn't get the memo" said Harry "I'm going to go put up the wards, I've still got some food, although we will need to restock soon, so we can eat then work on your Occlumency before trying to get some rest. I think this is going to be a long night."

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Day 4

I think that the only way I'll survive this with my sanity intact is if I keep a record of my time here, even if it's only mental, I'll at least feel like I'm doing something. I'm not sure how long I can take this though. I was trained to endure torture, and I'm confident in my abilities, but this is much harder because of one simple thing, Antym.

Had it just been the sorceress, I could tune it out and ignore her. But with him it's different. Every time he comes near me my emotions just run away with me. I feel so much hatred toward him, but I also feel sadness and even though it pains me to admit it, jealousy because the sorceress has more from him than he was ever willing to give me.

I don't know where the others are, the last time I saw either of them was before we were moved out of Baron Castle. We were all moved to separate holding cells for the transport and the next thing I remember is being shackled to this same wall that I'm on now.

I had thought that they were going to starve me and let me waste away due to my own bodily functions, while tormenting me in an attempt to gain information. I was only half right, they inject me with something that looks like a basic nutrient supplement, then they inject me with something that makes me feel really weak, I think it's a stasis compound to keep me from having to go through any bodily functions, I guess they didn't want to unchain me.

They also inject something else, I'm not sure what it is, but I think it's a hallucinogen, it makes me see things, some are memories and some are just too horrible to think about. I get that shot three times a day, right before the sorceress comes in to question me. Sometimes Antym is with her, but most of the time it's just her. The bastard won't even look me in the eye whenever he is here. I hear footsteps outside

the door, I guess it's time for another dose of needles before I go through another interrogation. When I get out of here I am going to hurt a lot of people.

...

Harry found his thoughts running away with him once again as he began placing the wards around their campsite. He was really worried about what was happening back home. His scar was flaring up a lot recently and only half of it was because of Kuja. He had his shield up at full strength, yet somehow the pain still managed to get through. He also wondered what everyone was doing, did they look for him? What had Ron told them? Surely Hermione would tell them-...

His heart gave a painful pang as he remembered that his friend was dead, she'd died right in front of him and he hadn't been able to do anything to stop it. His mind had never really had time to grasp that fact, as he'd soon had to run for his life and shortly thereafter he'd had to deal with coming to Temprus and getting a very big culture shock. Who else had died since he'd come here? He'd assumed that Mr. and Mrs. Weasley were dead because their life debts had been mysteriously absolved along with Ginny's, but he'd found out that she was alive, or at least that's what he gathered from his trip in the Lifestream, so he couldn't be sure on anything regarding his home.

He resolved to leave these and a thousand other unanswerable questions for another time, it was just too much to think about. He made his way back to the large tent and saw Sheyna sitting cross legged and concentrating deeply. He figured she was working on her Occlumency and decided to leave her alone, she needed to organize her mind and figure out what to do with the stuff Kuja left there on her own. As he watched her, he noticed that there was a slight aura around her and it was slowly growing brighter, it was light blue in color and as it grew, it looked like a gently burning flame.

Harry was startled out of his trance when he felt something trigger the wards. Whoever or whatever it was seemed to have seen through the repellent wards and were currently being subjected to quite a bit of pain due to the security measures he'd worked into the wards. He decided to see what was going on and ventured outside. He saw a

man of about average height trying to approach the tent, he wore all black and his face was mostly covered by a black hood and mask over his mouth and nose, his narrow grey eyes were visible however.

The man turned to face Harry and the wizard felt the wards crumble in an instant, he wasn't sure how this man had broken his wards, but he decided to be very careful with this foe.

"You must be the guy with the huge bounty on his head." said the man in an amused tone. "You're going to make us a lot of money, and your friend will just sweeten the deal."

"You should realize that money isn't everything." said Harry "It isn't worth throwing your life away."

"Who said anything about me dying?" asked the man mockingly "From the descriptions and reports I'd thought you'd look a bit more formidable."

'If he wants formidable, I'll give him formidable.' thought Harry as he began to gather his magic to prepare for battle. Even at his current level of strength he didn't think this man would be a problem. As he gathered his magic he sensed two other presences around the area, he couldn't allow them to get into the tent since Sheyna was too deep in her meditation to notice anything at the moment.

The man threw four shirkens at Harry in quick succession, the wizard dodged the attack easily but was caught off guard when the ninja caught him from behind with a kick to the back. Harry quickly turned around and aimed a punch at where the assailant should have been, but he hit only air. He felt something grab his foot and the next thing he knew he was being swung through the air. He hit the ground with a loud 'thump'.

The force of the blow made him extremely dizzy and he vaguely wondered how this ninja was walking all over him. He shook his head to clear it and looked up to see the ninja standing above him with a large throwing knife in his hand.

“If I aim just right, this won’t kill you, but it will cut deep enough to cause some real damage and with the poison on it, you’ll be incapacitated and immune to magical healing, all while your insides slowly deteriorate.”

The pause in the fight was all Harry needed to recover from the unexpected beating, he’d underestimated the ninja, but that was something he wasn’t doing again. With a sudden burst of speed, he had gotten into a crouching position and has sent his foot out to trip the ninja. He caught his enemy by surprise and managed to knock him off his feet. Harry quickly sent a fireball towards the ninja, but he suddenly sank into the ground as if it were water.

Harry felt the vibrations in the ground and pinpointed where the ninja was about to emerge. He whirled around and thrust out with a kick just as the ground exploded in front of him. The kick sent the ninja flying into a tree, before he could slide to the ground, Harry conjured four, large, wooden spikes and aimed them at his arms. The spikes connected, one going through the top of each shoulder, the other two going through his forearms.

The other presences were moving toward the tent, and Harry quickly apparated in front of it. He still didn’t see anyone else, but he knew that they were close by. Suddenly, someone jumped out of a tree and was aiming a kick in his direction. Harry caught sight of some vicious looking blades mounted on the sides and front of the incoming boot and quickly dodged it. He barely drew his sword in time to block a double swipe from two vicious looking katanas.

His new foes looked similar to the first, only one was female and the other was a much taller male. The male had eyes similar to the other ninja while the female had blue eyes that seemed to swirl when you looked in them. The woman had the blades on her boots and also had small blades on the end of each finger. The man’s katanas were slightly longer than normal katanas and looked to have slightly serrated blades.

“You are better than we expected.” said the man “We didn’t come here looking for you two, but with the reward on it was too good of an opportunity to miss.”

"I'm not letting you take me in to the sorceress or anyone else." said Harry

"That's fine." said the woman in a somewhat gleeful tone "I like it when the prey does things the hard way."

'Great, a psycho bitch' thought Harry bitterly "I guess what I did to your friend wasn't a good enough deterrent."

"Ginaji is only a middle class warrior." said the man emotionlessly "You will find us much harder to deal with."

He rushed at Harry with one katana outstretched while the other was held back but still pointing forward. Harry met the first katana with his gunblade and blasted the other one backward with a blast of magic. The other ninja rushed into the fray, swiping at Harry with her vicious claws. The wizard deflected her attacks with a promptly placed shield while still parrying blows from the other attacker.

Harry sent off an electric shockwave by combining multiple Thundaga spells with the actual spell itself. The combination of junctioned magic and natural magic was a powerful weapon and it was one that Harry had come to use often. The attack sent the two ninjas flying in opposite directions. Harry was about to go after one of them when he felt the ground vibrating. He was having a hard time figuring out where it was going, he felt something coming up right underneath him, as well as something coming up on the inside of the tent.

He quickly moved backwards and blasted an explosion curse at the ground just as it exploded upwards. The curse exploded upon impact and made a small crater in the ground. The female ninja lay motionless at the center of the crater. Harry wasted no time in heading towards the tent, but he was surprised when he saw a bright flash, seconds later the ninja came flying out of the tent.

A fiery blue streak came soaring out of the tent, destroying the shelter in the process. The figure went straight for the ninja that it had sent flying. The figure hovered above the fallen ninja and seemed to be preparing for some kind of spell. Harry got a good look at the figure

and could clearly see that it was Sheyna. Her face betrayed no emotions, unlike the time before, now it seemed that she was in a deep state of calm. She thrust her hand toward the ninja and a beam of light blue ice energy was sent hurtling toward the unfortunate target.

“Frozen Fire!” she yelled as the beam struck. A pure white flame arose from the point of impact. The fire was white all over, except close to the ground where it was a cold blue color. The flame didn’t produce smoke, instead a thick, frosty mist arose from the fire, freezing the nearby trees and coating the ground in a thick layer of frost. Harry doubted the ninja could survive that, and concentrated on finding the last remaining ninja.

He didn’t have to look long, because his target came at him with his blades ready. Harry met the first strike with his gunblade and countered with a kick to the man’s midsection. The blow sent the man staggering backwards, but he quickly recovered and countered by throwing a shiriken at Harry’s head. The wizard simply banished the incoming projectile back at its sender, causing the ninja to duck quickly. This momentary distraction was all the time Harry needed. He closed the distance between them and began pummeling the man with the flat of his gunblade, delivering punches and kicks here and there.

When the man was sufficiently beaten, Harry grabbed him and forced him to make eye contact with him. He started looking through the man’s mind, but was encountering some resistance. He decided to make this quick and sought out any information on the sorceress. There was quite a bit, including the location of the tower where the sorceress resided. Harry pulled out of the man’s mind and threw the ninja to the ground.

He sensed something behind him and turned just in time to see the female ninja coming at him from the air with her claws pointing downward. He brought up his blade, ready to counter, but a golden beam of energy hit the airborne ninja, sending her crashing to the ground, a few feet away from her partner. Harry looked for the source of the attack and saw Sheyna still hovering in the air with one of the pistols in her hand. A golden glow seemed to surround the weapons.

She suddenly turned the gun towards Harry and fired. Harry instinctively put up a shield, but it wasn't necessary as the beam went right past him and struck the sword-wielding ninja. Harry watched as Sheyna fired another round of beams into the ninja, making sure he didn't get up again. She then turned to the female ninja and prepared to do the same. She gathered energy in both hands and brought them together in front of her. The blue energy took the shape of a rectangular prism inside a transparent sphere.

"Lunar Impulse!" she said yelled as she sent the small sphere toward the female ninja. As the attack went through the air, it seemed to grow more and more solid looking, and just as it was about to hit the fallen ninja, something appeared out of the shadows and absorbed the energy into a golden glove. The figure was very tall and Harry couldn't make out too many of his features, all he could see were cold crimson eyes and a golden gauntlet on his left hand.

The gauntlet glowed with energy as the new comer released the attack back toward Harry. The wizard channeled his magic into his gunblade and used the weapon to deflect the blast back at the new comer. The man quickly grabbed his fallen comrade and disappeared. When the attack hit the ground, it exploded with tremendous force. Harry quickly conjured a shield, and he saw Sheyna do the same. The explosion nearly leveled the entire section of forest, killing several fiends and several of the local wildlife.

When the smoke cleared, Harry looked around at the devastation. The only sign that there had once been trees here, was the small charred stumps that littered the area. Harry saw Sheyna land on the ground and let her aura fade. She looked a bit out of breath, but otherwise alright.

"You okay Harry?" she asked after a few minutes.

"I should be asking you that." said Harry "What was that?"

"Something to do with my powers, I'm starting to learn to control them." she said

“Not that I’m not happy about this, but how did you learn to use them so quickly?” asked Harry

“The Occlumency helps.” said Sheyna “Apparently I already knew, I just had to look for it. When I was looking through my mind, I kept seeing this light, and I was trying to get to it, then I felt someone coming towards me and I knew they were hostile, next thing I know, I sent him flying out of the tent and I was casing after him.”

“I was a bit worried when I saw him go after you.” said Harry “I’m glad you were able to handle yourself.”

“He didn’t stand a chance.” said Sheyna confidently

“Glad you’re confident, but right now I think we need to get out of there.” Said Harry

“What for?” asked Sheyna

“I don’t know about sorceresses, but wizards can sense when really strong magic occurs near them.” said Harry “The sorceress just seems like a really powerful witch, so I’m sure she might have sensed all the magic we both used and I don’t want to be here if she sends something looking for us.”

“You’re right.” said Sheyna “Even though I think we could handle it, if we can avoid it, that’s better. Where do we go from here then?”

“I know where the sorceress is.” said Harry “I probed one of their minds before you killed him, he knew a lot about the sorceress and her knight, as well as you, me and the others.”

“Think they’ll be back?” she asked

“Hard to say.” said Harry as they made their way out of the destroyed clearing while the rain continued to pour. “I don’t know how many more there are, but that last guy was different from the others.”

“He seemed to move like a shadow.” said Sheyna “That’s how he got away, he grabbed the girl and slipped into the shadows.”

“Well, I’ll just have to add these guys to the long list of ‘People Who Want to Kill Me’ I think they’ll fit in nicely with the rest.”

“At least you’re not brooding about it this time.” said Sheyna “If this had happened back when we first met, you’d have been having your own little pity party.”

“For the last time, I, Don’t, Brood.” said Harry sternly “I just get lost in negative thoughts sometimes.”

“That’s brooding.” said Sheyna

“No it’s not.” said Harry “Whatever, we need to make a plan, we can’t just turn into the front door.”

“Can’t we start at the top and work our way down?” asked Sheyna “I’m sure she’d never think anyone would try that.”

“The tower is huge, so unless I had a broom, I don’t think I’m flying that far up.” said Harry “But I do have an idea though.”

He grabbed her hand and before she could protest he apparated away.

...

Day 32

I’m not sure if that’s right or not, I was out for a while, I don’t think it was too long, as that bitch was slapping me awake not twenty minutes ago, but it still kind of feels like I was out for quite some time. These monsters have reached an all time low. They’re now tempting me with freedom. Before I collapsed I thought I was free. Harry had come and gotten me out, he’d already rescued the others and we were almost out of this damned tower, then everything went wrong.

‘Harry’ wasn’t Harry, he was just someone the sorceress made to look like him. The same for the others. She seemed to get a good laugh out of the whole thing, and Antym just stood there like always,

not saying anything. I should have known better than to get my hopes up, they'd done similar things already, but I always kept thinking that this time might be real, well not again, I won't let them trick me again. I'll find a way out of there, and when I do, I'm going to see to it that Mia has a slow and painful death.

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Working for a sorceress had its ups and downs. For Antym Leonheart however, most of his experiences where the latter. The past few weeks had been especially hard for him. One part of his mind was perfectly fine with the fact that he'd further betrayed his friends. Another part of him, the part that Mia and Griever hadn't managed to snuff out yet, was angry at himself and was trying to figure out a way to improve the situation. The problem was that he couldn't act against an order from Mia, and she'd ordered him to make sure that Andrea didn't escape.

Helping the others was a totally different issue. The fact that they were no longer in the tower was bad enough, but knowing where Mia had sent them made it all the more difficult to find a way to help them, even if he could. He could hear the voice in his head telling him to stop fighting and just accept his role as a knight. He didn't need anything else as long as he protected his sorceress. He once again cursed commander Dinct for ordering him to take the mission that led to his current situation.

"It's time for our daily 'talk' with our visitor." said the voice of Mia in his head.

"I'll meet you there." he said in his usual monotone.

If there was one thing he knew that Mia hated it was the fact that she couldn't manipulate his emotions, she knew he hated her, but she also knew that as long as the bond between sorceress and knight remained in tact, there was nothing he could do about it. On the other hand, Griever was proud to serve the sorceress. Apparently he'd done it on more than one occasion, but the details were few and far between and all Antym knew was that one of the sorceresses he'd served looked similar to Mia.

He made his way to the holding cell and walked inside. Once again, Mia was asking Andrea the same question, and getting no answers.

“How many SeeDs are still active after the battle with Strife and Baron?”

“ ... ”

“What is so special about the Offworlder?”

“ ... ”

“You are trying my patience, SeeD.” said Mia menacingly “Perhaps a bit more incentive is in order, but not the usual, that doesn’t seem to work on you.”

Antym noticed something about Andrea, even though she was clearly very weak, something in her eyes told him that something interesting was about to happen. He knew that if Mia kept taunting her it would only accelerate whatever it was that was about to happen, so he remained silent like always.

“Let’s have a little fun with your delicate psyche.” said Mia gleefully. She ran a perfectly manicured finger over Andrea’s cheek and the SeeD twitched angrily at the contact. Mia then cupped her chin and started staring into her eyes.

Antym knew what she was doing. Some sorceresses had the ability to create dreams. Dreams that could feel as real as reality and could either be a vision of paradise or an incarnation of Hell. Antym didn’t need to wonder about which kind of dream Mia was giving Andrea. The SeeD began screaming and writhing in pain and terror. He wanted to stop it, but there was nothing he could do. Mia let go of the SeeD and started laughing happily. The dream was in place and it would stay that way until Mia wanted it to end.

“Come along Antym, we need to...” she was cut off when Andrea screamed again, but this wasn’t a scream of terror, this was a bellow

of rage. That same look that Antym noticed before was back in her eyes, and he knew that she'd finally reached a breaking point.

Red and purple energy began to radiate from the SeeD's body. He hair changed from blond to a glowing red and her skin went from an unhealthy pale color to a startling neon purple that glowed brightly. The bonds anchoring her to the wall were obliterated by the explosion of energy and Andrea floated a few inches off the ground. She looked at Mia with pure hatred and before either the sorceress or Antym could do anything, she had charged at the other woman, pummeling her with punches and kicks.

Antym's knight reflexes kicked in and aimed a blow at Andrea's midsection. He was a bit surprised when she grabbed his hand and fixed him with a hateful glare. It was then that he noticed her eyes were no longer green, they were a bright gold color and literally burned with power.

She viciously backhanded the SeeD-turned-knight sending him crashing against the wall of the room. She then turned her attention back to Mia, but the distraction provided by Antym had given the sorceress time to recover. Andrea was hit with a Blizzaga spell and was knocked off balance by the force of the spell.

Other than the loss of footing, the spell didn't seem to effect her, she was quickly back on her feet and dodging the spells that Mia was sending her way. Antym picked himself up off the floor and prepared to aid his sorceress once more, that was about the time when klaxons started sounding in the castle.

"It's the intruder alarm!" yelled Mia "Go handle it, I'll finish up here."

Andrea screamed once more, while doing a thrusting motion with her left hand. A bolt of red lightning struck the sorceress, bringing her to the ground. Before she could get to her feet, Andrea had delivered a kick to her ribs. Mia snarled angrily and knocked Andrea away with a wave of magic. Antym hesitated before leaving, but one look from Mia told him that she expected him to follow her orders, so he left the room, ignoring the sounds of battle in his wake.

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Harry appeared outside of a cave in the middle of nowhere. At least that's what it looked like to Sheyna

"The sorceress lives in a cave?" asked Sheyna skeptically

"No" said Harry "We aren't even on Baron anymore."

"What?" asked the Lunarian confused "Why would we come to a place like this?"

"For supplies." said Harry "There are a lot of potions ingredients here and I need to make a few things before I leave."

"What do you mean before you leave?" asked Sheyna "We're going together, aren't we?"

"Afraid not." said Harry "It'll be better if I do this alone. That way if something goes wrong, I've still got you in a position to help."

"I get the feeling there's more to this." said Sheyna "You have no idea what to expect when you get there, or how many enemies you might have to fight at one time, I should go with you."

"I'll be fine." said Harry "Plus I'm going to need you to do a couple of things while I'm gone."

"Such as?" she asked coolly

"I need you to make a few potions." he told her "I know you've never done it before, but if you follow the instructions I'm going to leave you with, it shouldn't be a problem."

"What kind of potions?" she asked wearily

"Nothing too complicated." said Harry "A few vials of Nourishment Draught and some Muscle Restoration Serum."

"If they're not right, don't blame me." said Sheyna "I've never done this before."

"It's not too much different then cooking." said Harry, mentally laughing at what Snape would say if he heard that. "I'm not sure how long I'll be gone, but the potions only take a couple hours to brew, I have a feeling I'm going to need them. There's one more thing too."

"What?" asked Sheyna a little irritably

Harry took off the sorceress' necklace and handed it to her. "I don't want that anywhere near another sorceress, who knows what could happen."

"You said you had to make a few things too?" asked Sheyna, not commenting on the necklace at all.

"Well just one big thing." said Harry mysteriously "This should make things interesting."

An hour and a half later, Harry had apparated to the spot he'd seen in the ninja's mind. He was looking at a large white tower. Unlike Baron castle, this building was crafted to look beautiful, it was in a meadow with flowers around it, and it was not a place you'd expect an evil sorceress to reside. Harry shifted invisible and made his way to the base of the tower. He placed sticking charms on his feet and hands and began to climb the incredibly smooth surface of the tower.

'Well this is just great, she's pissed at me.' he thought

"And you're surprised because...?" Seth asked sarcastically

'Decided to grace me with you presence have you?' asked Harry

"More like offering my advice." said Seth "Griever is nearby, and in case you've forgotten, he's junctioned to the guy who almost killed you. I thought you might like to know."

'And more great news to top this most glorious day.' said Harry bitterly

“Interesting...” muttered Zero “Griever radiates a conflicting aura, something is not right with his spirit.”

‘His spirit?’ asked Harry

“I am not certain of the cause, but his spirit has lost balance. His emotions are in turmoil and his mind is shattered.”

‘So he’s crazy.’ said Harry ‘No wonder that guy was so vicious.’

He continued climbing until he estimated that he was about halfway up the tower. He cast a charm on the wall to make it transparent. On the other side he saw a spiraling staircase and no doors, so he decided that this was a good place to enter. He reached into the bag on his side and pulled out a flat circular device. He placed it against the tower and it curved to contour to the shape of the wall. Harry silently cast an enlarging charm on the object and it grew to four times its previous size. He then tapped the thing with his finger and it glowed faintly. There was a slight hissing sound as the object slowly banished the wall from existence.

When the process was finished, Harry climbed through the hole and landed on a spiraling staircase. He cast an illusion on the hole to make it appear solid, not wanting to close the hole should he need an exit. His reserves weren’t at full yet, but he figured that he could at least levitate himself and the others to the ground if worse came to worst.

He had two directions to choose from, so he decided to head upward. That was probably where the prison cells were. Harry didn’t notice when one of the statues’ eyes adorning the hallway suddenly glowed red. What he did notice was the loud klaxon blaring around him. He wondered briefly how he’d been caught. He was still invisible and he was sure he’d been quiet. That meant that there was some magical means of detection that he hadn’t anticipated. He mentally noted never to make that mistaken again before letting his mind snap back to the problem at hand.

If they could detect him magically, there was no reason why they couldn't find him if he was invisible, that meant that wasting energy on maintaining the form was pointless. He shifted back to normal and continued his climb up the stairs. He saw a shadow coming toward him and knew that someone was on the stairs above him. He drew his gunblade and took a defensive stance. When the figure rounded the corner, Harry recognized him immediately.

"You!" said the knight, he too recognized Harry "I was hoping you'd show up here eventually, after what you did to Kuja at Baron I know you've gotten stronger, this might actually be a challenge."

"Move aside." said Harry "I came here to get my friends out, if you don't move I'm going to be forced to kill you."

His threat was met with laughter. The knight was clearly unimpressed by him and was severely underestimating him. That would prove to be his undoing. Harry was on him in the blink of an eye, he was relentless in his assault, and the knight barely had time to draw his gunblade and mount a defense.

Harry wasn't wasting any time. His attacks were all meant to kill or severely disable. He slashed his gunblade at a thirty degree angle towards the knight's neck. It was blocked, but Harry's other hand had charged a small Flare spell and Harry launched it right at his opponent's face. The spell would have ended the knight's existence if he hadn't quickly cast a Reflect spell. The spell was blasted back at Harry with twice the force, and with such a close range and the suddenness of the spell's altered course, Harry was blasted in the chest by the flare spell.

Thanks to his junction of Zero, the spell did minimal damage, but the force of it made him stumble backwards. Before he could regain his footing, the knight was upon him. He dodged the punch thrown at him and quickly twisted his body to avoid the incoming gunblade. The blow still grazed his skin, the energy blade leaving a thin smoking trail in its wake. Harry quickly boosted his speed with a Haste spell and slashed the knight across the chest before he could recover from his last attack, apparently the energy gunblade was heavy and required two hands to use it efficiently, his opponent was only using one,

leaving one hand free. The problem was his attacks were slower because of it.

Unfortunately for Harry, the knight's armor absorbed most of the damage, although it was severely damaged where the attack landed. Harry used his free hand to send a continuous volley of cutting hexes at the knight. The reflect spell was deflect them, but it could only take so much damage and it couldn't be renewed due to its effect. The barrier blocked almost all spells, including ones like Curaga or Esuna. This meant that if another Reflect spell were cast while one was in effect, the spell that was already working would rebound the new spell to the closest target.

The knight charged forward, his gunblade held in both hands. Harry increased the barrage of spells, while he blocked the attacks. Finally, one of his spells came close to breaking the barrier. Harry cast one more, putting more power behind it. The spell tore right through the now paper thin barrier and hit the knight just below chest. Once again his armor took care of most of the damage, but this time some of the spell got through, causing a decent cut to form.

Harry launched another Flare spell, but once again the knight put up a Reflect spell. Harry had been expecting this and cast another Flare spell to counter the first. When the spell collided Harry drew the magical energy into his gunblade and rushed at his opponent. The knight tried to block but when his gunblade made contact with Harry's the magic from the two flare spells exploded around the knight.

The force of the explosion caused the knight to lose his grip on his gunblade and sent him crashing through the inside wall and through the floor on the other side. Harry waited for the bricks to stop falling before going through the first hole and jumping down to the floor below.

He looked around for his adversary and found him standing unarmed and leaning against a pillar.

"I won't lose to you." said the knight

"Too late for that." said Harry, advancing towards him

“Now I’ll show you what power is.” said the knight “Atma!”

When he spoke the word a weapon appeared in his hand. The gunblade sizzled with white energy and had a golden hilt. The knight easily deflected Harry’s attacks and countered with some of his own. Harry had to back off and take the defensive, it seemed that this new gunblade didn’t have the problem with weight like the other one had, therefore the attacks from his opponent were much faster and more accurate. It took everything Harry had just to keep up with the knight.

Harry apparated to the other side of the room in order to get a slight break. The knight didn’t even bother to go after him, he simply slashed the sword through the air in Harry’s direction. An energy beam lanced out from the blade and caught Harry off guard. The attack burned his midsection severely and the force of it made him crash into the wall. His opponent didn’t let him recover. He drove his blade through Harry’s abdomen, eliciting a cry of pain from the wizard and causing him to lose his grip on his weapon.

Harry was effectively pinned to the wall, and the blade was burning his insides. He knew what was about to happen, and he couldn’t let it. He grabbed the burning white blade, ignoring the pain in his hands, and attempted to pull it out. As much as he tried, it wasn’t working and he was running out of time and options.

“Goodbye weakling.” said the knight “I expected more from you.”

Just as he was about to pull the trigger on the blade, Harry let go of the weapon and summoned his own gunblade back to him, he slashed at the knight’s wrist, causing him to pull his weapon back in order to deflect the blow. Harry slumped to the ground, but again the knight didn’t allow him to get up. He kicked Harry viciously in the ribs before bringing his blade down to finish the job. Harry once again apparated out of the way and quickly cast a Curaga on himself to heal the wound in his abdomen. The wound closed, but the healing wasn’t nearly as good as Harry expected it to be. It wouldn’t take much to reopen the wound.

The knight charged at Harry once again. The wizard started gathering his energy in preparation for a spell, countering the onslaught of blows with some of his own. The whole building started to tremble, making Harry wonder what else was going on. He didn't have time to worry about it though as he dodged another one of his opponent's attacks. He almost had enough energy to power the next spell, and he needed to time everything just right.

The knight suddenly jumped backwards and leapt into the air. His blade flared with energy as he reached the peak of his jump. He came down on a course straight for Harry. The wizard decided this was as good of an opportunity as any to implement his plans and got ready.

"Chimhazard!" yelled the knight as he came down. A red energy ball with orange in the middle appeared at the tip of his blade and as he descended, the ball grew larger. The knight grinned with anticipation as he saw Harry bring up his sword to guard against the attack. When the knight reached Harry, his blade passed right through the wizard and struck the ground underneath him. The illusion of Harry disappeared just in time for the knight to hear another spell being cast.

"Ultima!" yelled Harry from above. The spell's area of effect was huge, taking up over three quarters of the room. The blast tore right through the floor, sending both combatants to the level below. When the impacted the floor, the spell's force caused it to break as well, sending them down yet another level.

Harry slowly pulled himself out of the rubble. He was severely winded from the use of such a strong spell. Had he been at his maximum magical strength, the spell would have been no problem on him, but since he had already been fighting and hadn't recovered from the battle with Kuja, he was quite drained.

The rubble pile to his left exploded upward, revealing the knight. His armor was all but non-existent and his chest was now completely bare. He had several bleeding wounds all over his body, as well as a few nasty burns. His gunblade was still gripped firmly in his hands, and his eyes looked murderous. He launched another beam from his

weapon at the wizard, but this time Harry dodged it and started to move toward him for an attack of his own.

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Andrea didn't know where the power came from, all she knew was that it was there and she could use it. She rushed at Mia, sending punches and kicks as fast as her body would allow. Most of her blows hit, but they only seemed to do superficial damage. The sorceress blasted her with a Blizzaga spell, but she quickly recovered, not even feeling the ice spikes when they dug into her skin.

She knew that if she had a sword, she could fight much easier. As if in response to her thought, a blade of energy formed in her hands. She didn't bother to figure out how it got there, she simply used it. The sorceress nimbly dodged the slashes, and summoned a staff to her hands in order to block the blows. She blasted the SeeD with a Tornado spell, sending her crashing against the wall after being hurled about by the whirlwind.

Once again, Andrea didn't feel the pain that her body was in. She got up and attacked her opponent again. She willed the blade to get stronger, and it responded by increasing in width and length. It also started glowing a deeper shade of red.

"Hell blade!" yelled Andrea as her speed suddenly increased, causing her to appear as little more than a red and purple blur to the sorceress. Mia was hit with slash after slash from the energy blade as Andrea moved around her at phenomenal speed. The sorceress only managed to keep herself from getting killed by placing a shield, but even then some of the blows managed to pierce the barrier, causing deep cuts wherever they landed.

Andrea took the sorceress by surprise once more when she grabbed her and drove her into the floor. The force of the blow carried them down several more floors, causing the tower to tremble from the force. Andrea prepared to finish the battle and brought her energy blade down on the sorceress. The attack was blocked by a force field, the backlash knocking Andrea off her feet.

The sorceress slowly rose from the rubble, her eyes were glowing with light blue fire. She also had the addition of two golden angel wings on her back. Her face was contorted with fury and she started to advance on Andrea.

"You filthy, disgusting, whore!" yelled Mia "You hurt me, and that will not go unpunished!"

Andrea was bombarded with a barrage of Firaga spells, when she hit the ground the sorceress launched a stream of lightning bolts toward her. She wasn't quick enough to dodge, and the spells hit their marks. The sorceress walked towards the fallen SeeD and reached her just as her hair went back to being blond and her skin returned to the same unhealthy pale color it had been before.

Exhaustion and pain washed over Andrea's body and she fought to remain conscious. She wondered if it had all been another trick, the power could have come from the sorceress, just so she could get her hopes up, now she was going to die and there was nothing she could do about it. She was lifted into the air by the sorceress's magic. She felt an invisible hand tightening around her neck, and she knew it wouldn't be long before she was finished.

Suddenly one of the walls was shattered and a figure came crashing through it, quickly followed by another. The figure on the ground gripped his black gunblade tightly before countering the overhead strike from his opponent with a rising attack.

"Soaring Dragon!" the figure with the black gunblade called as he attacked. His blade flashed silver and the outline of a dragon was made as the energy released by the sword overcame his opponent.

"Antym!" cried the sorceress in alarm.

The other figure turned around and Andrea saw that it was Harry. She felt a surge of hope at the prospect of being rescued, but then she remembered how it had gone before. Harry didn't know where this place was, for all she knew he was still at the bottom of the Iafa Tree, most likely dead. Whoever this was, it couldn't be him.

“That was his name?” asked ‘Harry’

The sorceress had long since released Andrea from her magical grip and had rushed over to her fallen knight. The man was now in no shape to battle. The continuous attacks from Harry had finally paid off. The last attack had hit dead on, leaving a severely injured knight in its wake. And because Antym had kept a reflect spell on for most of the battle meant that he couldn’t heal himself, or be healed by anyone else until the spell dissipated, the problem was he probably wouldn’t live that long.

“You’ll pay for this.” said Mia in a calm tone. “I won’t allow you to leave here alive. Antym, get up! I command you, get up and destroy this vermin!”

Harry knew that there was no way the knight should be able to stand, but much to his surprise, Antym shakily stood to his feet and brought his weapon to the ready. The blade wasn’t shining as brightly as it was, and some parts of it appeared to be made of metal now. The handle had also turned silver instead of gold, making Harry wonder about the nature of the weapon.

“You won’t loose, I won’t allow it!” yelled the sorceress “That power the girl used, it was the legendary power of Trance, you can do it to, go into Trance!”

“You just can’t order someone to go into trance!” yelled Harry “If you keep making him fight you’re going to kill him!”

Harry really didn’t care if the knight died or not, but he couldn’t help but comment on the futility of the woman’s actions.

“Silence!” yelled the sorceress, sending a spell at Harry and hurling him backwards. “You will follow my commands Antym, USE THE POWER OF TRANCE NOW!”

It looked like the knight’s body was moving on its own accord. He spread his arms wide and began to scream as black energy surrounded him. Soon there was nothing but a ball of pulsing black energy. The whole tower began to shake and Harry had trouble

regaining his footing because of it. It was about this time, when the doors to the room they were in opened, and soldiers began to pour in. They wore an odd styled armor which made them resemble cybernetic fish men. Their suits were a light turquoise color and they had long claws on each of their gloves.

The soldiers didn't get a chance to do anything because they were all completely destroyed when the ball of black energy exploded revealing Antym. He now had new armor, which was completely black in color. It consisted of a body vest and arm guards with a matching helmet. His skin was still visible on his upper arms and face and it was an extremely dark purple in color. He didn't glow like the others when they were in Trance, instead he radiated darkness. His eyes were the most distinguishing feature. They were a dark blue and they glowed like burning sapphires against the darkness of his face.

His blade had also undergone a change. It was no longer a gunblade at all, instead it was a dark silver energy sword with a black handle. There was also a stripe of black energy running down the middle of the blade. The energy spiked out at different areas of the blade, giving it a jagged appearance.

Harry was surprised to say the least, he hadn't expected anyone else to use Trance, and now he was fighting someone who had reached that level of power. Something about the aura felt wrong though. He figured it had something to do with the sorceress forcing him into it.

The knight sent a wave of dark energy at Harry. There was no way for Harry to dodge the incoming wave, so he braced himself and did his best to block the attack. His attempts proved fruitless as the wave easily overpowered him and drove him into the ground while burning his body. Harry hadn't even recovered when he felt something heavy slam into his lower abdomen. When the smoke cleared he was looking at the face of Antym, the knight had his foot on Harry stomach and wasn't bothering to reduce the amount of weight he put on it. His sword was pointed at Harry's neck and he had a sadistic grin on his face.

Before the knight could get the final blow, Harry forced the knight off him with a blast of magic. Harry didn't want to be on the receiving end

of that sword anymore, so he did the only thing he could think of to get it away from his opponent.

“Accio Antym’s sword!” he said as he cast the summoning charm. The blade was yanked from its wielder’s hand and came flying towards Harry. While it was in the air, Harry noticed that it turned into a silver sword with a golden handle. He could clearly see the jewels on the hilt and he was sure that if he studied the blade, he’d see the name Godric Gryffindor.

When Harry caught the sword it shifted yet again. Harry felt the sword drawing from his own power and watched as the sword lengthened and broadened, the blade went from turned from silver to a pale blue diamond, the hilt remained gold, but the jewels were replaced by empty holes, which Harry assumed were for materia. The blade didn’t get any heavier, but Harry could feel the power radiating from the blade. he holstered his gunblade and swung the new sword experimentally. It felt natural in his hands and tore through the air with ease.

Antym finally recovered from the shock of loosing his weapon. He cast a Flare spell at Harry, which the wizard shrugged off easily thanks to Bahaumut Zero. The knight cast several more spells, getting faster as he went, the spells started becoming more powerful as well. Suddenly a large chunk of granite slammed into Harry from behind, he turned his head to see the sorceress standing there with a satisfied smirk on her face. She was gathering energy for another spell, and Harry knew he couldn’t dodge spells from both the knight and sorceress.

While Harry was busy dodging spells, Andrea was trying to pull herself together. The sorceress had left her alone after commanding Antym to go into Trance. Mia had her back turned toward Andrea, and the SeeD knew that this was most likely her last chance to get revenge, all she needed was a weapon. Either by fate or coincidence a clattering sound drew her attention. A gunblade with a blade the color of an Aura spell and a silver handle fell behind her. She pulled her weakened body toward the gunblade and gripped it tightly. She stood up on shaky legs, using every ounce of strength to move her

body. With one rapid burst of adrenaline, she brought the blade down on Mia's right shoulder, pulling the trigger just as the impact started.

The attack tore through the sorceress' shoulder blade and sliced neatly through her heart and one of her lungs. She fell to the ground with a look of shock on her face. Andrea looked down at her and smirked triumphantly before collapsing into unconsciousness. Neither Harry nor Antym noticed the bright sphere of light coming out of the sorceress' corpse and entering Andrea's body. Nor did they notice when the sorceress' body burst into flames. What they did notice was the sudden magical backwash from the destroyed bond between sorceress and knight.

Antym screamed in pain as he grabbed his head in both hands. Harry didn't know what was going on since he'd been more concerned about dodging incoming spells to notice much else. When no spell came from the sorceress, Harry looked in that direction and saw Andrea lying unconscious near a large black scorch mark. He ran over to her and checked her over. She was badly injured and it looked like she'd been fed the bare minimum for survival. Her skin was pale and her entire body just looked slightly withered.

"YOU!" yelled Antym, but his voice held something else, it was like there was a growl from a great beast behind it. "I'LL MAKE YOU PAY, HER DEATH SHALL NOT GO UNPUNISHED!"

He rose into the air, almost touching the high ceiling above. He gathered black energy in one hand and silver energy in the other. A translucent image appeared around him that looked like a black lion with long white hair and two small horns on its head. The creature had large white wings coming off its back and vicious looking claws on its hands and feet. Harry didn't need to guess as to what the creature was, it was Griever.

The energy went from Antym's hands to the GF's. When the power was transferred the energy balls grew to five times their original size. Harry didn't know what was about to happen, but he wasn't going to sit around and find out. He didn't know where the others were, but he needed to get Andrea and himself out of there quickly. His musings were interrupted when Antym and Griever shouted in a unified voice.

“Eternal Pulsar!” He brought both energy spheres together, releasing a massive shockwave of energy which enveloped the entire room. Then another wave of energy came out from him, followed by another and another. Soon it was just one continuous stream of power emanating from a single point. The energy destroyed anything it came in contact with, and it was only a quick shield cast by Harry that saved he and Andrea’s lives. Suddenly a beam of silver light surrounded Antym. The energy that had been released came roaring back toward its source, taking anything it touched with it. When the energy returned, Griever released it all at once creating a massive explosion of silver and white light. As the blast zoomed toward Harry his only thought was that his shield was not going to handle a blast that powerful. He gripped his sword tightly and used the other arm to grab Andrea. He focused the rest of his power on one final spell and cast it just as the explosion overtook his shield.

The blast destroyed the entire room as well as the ones above and below it. The tower had received so much damage by this point that its collapse was inevitable. Antym watched as the tower collapsed around him and he knew he needed to leave. He’d destroyed one enemy, and it was time to take care of the others. The sorceress was dead, so he was free from her control, but the influence of the Dark Trance was still active and Griever was still an ever present entity in his mind. These factors made it impossible for him to form rational thought, and his mind could only work in terms of battle. He knew who his enemies were and he was going to destroy them all. He flew out of the collapsing tower with a look of dark satisfaction on his face. He didn’t know where the Gardens were, but he’d simply destroy whatever he found until he came across them.

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A/N: Well that was long, not my longest, but still pretty long. I appreciate all the feedback I get for this story and I hope I can get the next chapter out in less than a month this time . I think the writer’s block is gone, now all I have to do is fight the laziness.

Wounds

Sheyna paced around the room restlessly. Several cauldrons were bubbling near one of the walls, filling the room with various vapors. She silently fumed as she went about her work. Harry had left her to brew them and she intended to do it, but she didn't have to like it. She knew there was more to her being left behind than just the need for someone to guard the sorceress crystal and brew potions. Harry thought she couldn't handle herself yet, and as much as she hated to admit it, he was probably right. She did have more control over her powers, but the fact remained that she had a long way to go before she was back to how she was before.

She was startled back to reality when a loud whooshing sound followed by the sound of something landing on the floor came from behind her. She turned to see a very tired and very bloody Harry and an unconscious Andrea. She rushed over to the two of them and started checking out their injuries. Harry was in the worst shape with a deep puncture wound on the right side of his chest and several other cuts, she suspected that he'd also broken his ribs, yet again. Andrea had a lot of minor cuts and a few deep ones, she looked very pale and her breathing was extremely shallow.

She decided that she needed to get Andrea breathing better and stop the bleeding in her wounds as well. A Curaga should take care of the wounds but the exhaustion and malnourishment would take a lot of time to cure. In the meantime Harry wasn't moving much and he hadn't so much as moaned since getting back. He looked like he was conscious, but he also seemed to be in quite a bit of pain. He had his hand on the wound in his chest, in a vain effort to stop the bleeding.

She cast the Curaga spell on Andrea and as expected her wounds healed, she then turned to Harry, about to do the same when he stopped her.

"Don't" he said breathlessly

"I have to stop the bleeding" she protested

“Curaga...worse...tried before...can’t use magic...” his words were lost as he attempted to breathe and talk at the same time. Sheyna suspected that he had ruptured one, or possibly both, of his lungs and was having trouble breathing as a result. She still managed to get the gist of what he meant in spite of the broken speech, but that didn’t mean she knew what to do about it.

“What do I do then?” she asked getting a little panicky

“Calm down...potion in chest...blue” came the broken reply.

The trunk suddenly appeared beside Harry’s prone form and with what seemed a great effort, he reached over and tapped the lid, causing it to open. The simple actions caused him to wince in pain and he looked, if possible, even more exhausted than before.

“Don’t try anymore spells.” said Sheyna as she looked through his trunk for the ‘blue’ potion. She eventually found it and took it over to him. She gently poured the potion into his mouth bit by bit so that he could swallow it easily. She repeated the process a few times until the potion bottle was empty. Almost immediately the effects of the potion started to take place, Harry’s breathing became less strained and the bleeding in his wounds slowed considerably. He was far from recovered though since his wounds were still bleeding and he looked about ready to faint.

“We need to get you both somewhere a little more manageable.” said Sheyna

“The bastard probably has some sealed...bedrooms somewhere.” said Harry, still a bit breathless.

“Well since there’s just the one with the big bed in it, you’ll have to go in there.” said Sheyna

“Fine” said Harry, attempting to stand, he managed to get both feet on the floor before stumbling. Sheyna caught him before he could hit the floor again and let him lean most of his weight on her. Sheyna noticed that he was favoring his right leg and wondered what happened to the left one, it didn’t look injured, but he also had a boot

and pants covering it. They eventually made their way into the large master suite and Sheyna helped Harry get onto the bed.

“I’m going to get Andrea, DO NOT try to get up or use magic while I’m gone.” she ordered Harry

A grunt was the only response she received, so she took that as an affirmative and went to collect the fallen Seed.

...

The next few days were hard on everyone. Andrea still remained unconscious, but she seemed to be in some sort of coma. She would shake sometimes and there would be a spark of energy near her, and then she’d just lay still. Sheyna continued brewing potions and using what limited food there was to sustain herself and the others. The nutrient potions were helping Andrea immensely, she’d regained her color and she didn’t look as exhausted as she had before.

Harry on the other hand wasn’t doing as well as he or Sheyna would have liked. The wounds seemed to resist any type of magical assistance in healing. Sheyna had cleaned and bandaged them every day for the past week and she’d given Harry all the potions he’d requested, yet nothing was helping. The wounds just bled through their dressings, causing the wizard to go through several vials of blood replenishing potion. The good news was that the wounds were healing naturally, albeit very slowly.

“I’m going to stitch these shut.” said Sheyna to Harry.

They were in one of the normal bedrooms that Sheyna had discovered through her exploration of Grindlewald’s hidden cave. The place was actually very large. Harry had admitted that he hadn’t really searched the entire place thoroughly at the time when he’d found the hidden room, he’d been in a hurry to leave the island and only considered taking the many books that were left. As it happened the place was roughly the size of a small mansion. There were several rooms, some empty and some furnished, there were three sitting rooms, seven bedrooms, a kitchen, four bathrooms and six rooms that were completely empty.

“Just give it time, they’ll heal.” said Harry

“That’s what you said four days ago.” said Sheyna “I don’t know about you, but bleeding to death isn’t my idea of a good time, and we don’t have enough ingredients to keep making blood restoratives.

“Try a Curaga again.” said Harry

“No” said Sheyna “Last time we tried that you screamed like a little girl when all your wounds started burning.

“It hurt!” defended Harry

“And that’s my point” said Sheyna “You need to be healed and leaving those wounds open, even under the bandages, isn’t a good idea, they could easily become infected and then you’ll be in real trouble.

“Fine, stitch them then.” said Harry miserably “I didn’t scream like a girl though.”

Sheyna didn’t answer, instead she got a needle and threaded it before starting her ministrations.

“Ahh!...don’t push on it!”

“I have to apply some pressure, stop whining”

“I’m not-...ah!...do you have to...ow!...why is it every time I...shit!”

“You mean to tell me that you can withstand the Cruciatus, but this hurts?”

“Shut the hell up Seth!”

“There, done” said Sheyna

“I think you enjoyed that a little too much.” said Harry

“What?” asked Sheyna innocently while ‘accidentally’ pushing on one of the bandaged areas on Harry’s forearm

“Ow, damn it, that hurts!” said Harry

“Oops, sorry” said Sheyna, not sounding too apologetic

“Guess she’s still pissed at you.” observed Seth

“What was your first clue?” asked Harry sarcastically

“There were actually several indications of the female being displeased.” said Zero

“He was being sarcastic dragon breath.” said Seth

“Oh no” groaned Harry aloud

“Excuse me?” said Zero menacingly

“You heard me.” said Seth

“I do not find your attempts at humor funny whelp.” said Zero

“Come on guys, not again.” pleaded Harry

“The serpent shall learn his place.” declared Zero

“Bring it!” said Seth

Harry grabbed his head and winced when he felt the GF’s shifting around his mind, they’d done this several times since Zero had been junctioned, apparently Seth still held a grudge against Tiamat and decided that since he couldn’t get the dark dragon, one of its counterparts would have to do. Zero on the other hand, had never been junctioned to a human before and seemed to be fascinated by their behavioral patterns. This caused him to make odd comments at times that only seemed to irritate Seth.

Harry had considered removing them, but their power was helping him heal faster and that was something he didn't want to go without. He prepared himself to bare the minor jolts of pain through his head as the two Guardian Forces hashed out their differences in another pointless battle, they couldn't really hurt each other, but to them it was all about principal.

...

Harry's sleep was anything but fitful. He found himself watching a scene of utter carnage. It appeared to be some sort of village, it was nightfall and a storm was thundering overhead. Rain poured all around, but did nothing to quell the many flames which were consuming the village. Death Eaters ran around cursing helpless muggle victims, while others battled against what could only be vampires.

Harry was confused by this, if anything he thought the vampires would be trying to aid the Death Eaters, or at least be more concerned about all the food that they were killing, but it seemed as though the vampires were trying to protect the Muggles. Harry's attention was drawn to two figures standing in the middle of the village. He recognized one immediately as Voldemort. The other was a tall vampire, his face still looked mostly human, aside from the eyes and the large bat ears on the side of his head. He had a strange looking sword in his hands, it had what appeared to be a bleeding eye at the top of its hilt, and the blade was blood red, while the handle was pearly white.

Voldemort had no weapon, he didn't even have his wand drawn, it was as if he was unconcerned about the hostile vampire standing before him. Neither made a move to attack, they just stood there, staring each other down while looking for possible weaknesses.

"You have crossed the wrong clan this night, wizard." hissed the vampire in a deep, Russian accented voice.

"I am merely responding to your master's message, I don't take kindly to having one of my Death Eaters turned into a filthy half breed." said Voldemort

“You threatened us, we responded accordingly.” said the vampire
“The Verick Clan serves no one.”

“Then you and your brethren shall die as you should have long ago.”
The Dark Lord thrust his hand toward the vampire, causing a large wooden spike to drive itself right through the creature’s heart. The vampire grunted in pain, but the expected disintegration never came.

“You honestly thought such a cheap trick would work.” said the vampire while laughing and pulling out the wood. “A stake through the heart only works on younglings.”

The vampire moved at incredible speed, coming up behind Voldemort and brought his sword in an arch towards the dark wizard’s torso, intending on eviscerating him, but Voldemort was faster and caught the sword in his left hand without even turning around. As soon as Voldemort touched the blade however, he hissed in pain as his flesh was burned and he felt his blood going into the blade.

The vampire absorbed the blood through the sword and his eyes glowed as the magical blood made him stronger. The action enraged Voldemort and he didn’t give the vampire a chance to assimilate the influx of power. He sent a severing hex at the creature’s head, which the vampire only barely avoided. He kept on sending severing curses at the vampire, but the creature still avoided them. Growing tired of playing games, Voldemort conjured a strong burst of sunlight which stopped the creature in its tracks.

The radiant light quickly turned the vampire into ashes, its screams were like music to the Dark Lord’s ears, and he wanted to hear more cries of agony. He saw a muggle woman trying to escape in the distance, clutching her infant child as she ran. Voldemort took careful aim and sent the killing Curse. The sickly green light sailed through the air and hit its target right in the chest. The woman screamed in shock and dropped her now dead infant to the ground. She cried and babbled on in Russian, unaware of the Dark Lord walking up behind her.

“No one escapes Lord Voldemort, woman.” he said coldly

The woman looked up into the merciless violet eyes of the Dark Lord and was unable to move from the sheer terror that the creature before her exuded. The Dark Lord pointed his right index finger at the woman and cast one of his favorite curses. "Crucio" Harry could feel the pain from the curse and it was worse than anything he'd ever felt before. It had been a long time since he'd felt Voldemort's Cruciatus, but he could tell that it was much stronger than the last time. The woman let out an ear piercing scream as the curse did its work. Voldemort left the curse on for a full five minutes before releasing the woman.

She convulsed on the ground for several moments after the curse had been lifted. Her eyes were still wide from shock and pain and it was easy to see that the curse had shattered her mind. Voldemort cast an organ decaying curse on the woman and watched as she slowly withered away, not even able to scream anymore. He turned away from the dead body and walked back to the center of the village. His Death Eaters seemed to be having problems with some of the vampires, as they wielded blades similar to the other vampire. Few of his followers knew of the spell to conjure a ball of sunlight, and the ones that did, didn't have nearly enough power to do it on a level that would kill the vampires, the most they were managing to do was burn them slightly.

Voldemort took out his wand and pointed it at the sky. He did a complex series of motions before casting his spell. "Solem Transfero!" A ball of sunlight erupted from his wand and rose into the sky. It grew larger and larger as it rose and became steadily brighter. Soon the rain clouds dispersed leaving a circle of blue sky where the ball had risen. The vampires all started shrieking as the brilliant light consumed their undead flesh. The Death Eaters then made quick work of any remaining Muggles before surrounding their lord once more.

"Let it never be said the Lord Voldemort takes kindly to threats." said Voldemort "The news of this attack will spread through the other dark creatures and the Muggles will view it as a threat from wizards, pushing them closer to where I want them to be. The time for war will be upon us soon, and the next attack will have more resistance. I am

disappointed in many of you, I expected you to be able to handle a few half-breeds, but it appears I was wrong.”

Some of the Death Eaters visible shuddered, knowing that they were in for a night of torture and screaming by the looks of things. The Death Eaters soon disappeared leaving Voldemort standing alone in the smoking remains of the village. The light from the artificial sun had disappeared as well.

“Enjoy the show, Potter?” asked Voldemort with a sneer

“Not really” said Harry “It’s just the same old visions of random torture and over compensation. More or less what I’ve come to expect.”

Voldemort merely smirked at the statement before responding. “Are you saying I’m predictable?” he asked hotly

“As a matter of fact, I do” said Harry “You still have the ‘I want everyone to fear me’ tactic, and it really is stupid to me. You run around with a bunch of morons in Halloween masks and torture defenseless people to get your jollies. Then when you get mad you torture a random Death Eater and sometimes kill perfectly good followers, not that I think killing your followers is a bad thing, keep doing it please. And if all that isn’t enough you have to be overly dramatic with everything you do, you leave a skull deep throating a snake as your calling card when you kill people. Did I get everything?”

“You should learn some respect, boy.” said Voldemort angrily “Your intrusion into my mind and your arrogance will make your loved ones suffer.”

“Whatever” said Harry dismissively “Like you weren’t planning on hunting down whoever was still alive anyway. You’re easy to read, how’d you like losing control of all those fiends by the way?”

The Dark Lord’s eyes narrowed and his anger reached new heights. He lashed out with a mental equivalent of a Cruciatus Curse, catching Harry off guard and causing him to thrash around in mid air. Seconds

later Harry broke the curse and lashed out with an attack of his own. The Dark Lord was prepared however and blocked the attack easily.

“Time for you to go.” said Voldemort shoving Harry out of his mind and sending him back to his own body.

...

Harry's eyes shot open as he returned to consciousness. He now had a very bad headache to go with his other pains and he also had the after effects of the Cruciatus to deal with. In hindsight, trying to spy on Voldemort when he wasn't at full strength was a very stupid thing to do, while he did learn something, he'd paid a high price for it. The only good thing was that Sheyna didn't know he'd technically been doing magic and had once again aggravated the wounds, causing them to start bleeding once again.

“Now, how to fix this before she comes in here.” he thought quickly

He thought once again about why his wounds wouldn't heal correctly with magic. He'd gotten the majority of them from fighting Antym, they weren't as bad at first, but after he made the portkey, his magic began making them worse. Not knowing this at the time he'd cast a Curaga on himself, further worsening his injuries. Being hit by that last attack hadn't helped his situation either. He'd taken the brunt of the damage for Andrea while he turned his sword into a portkey.

“It had to be the sword” he thought aloud “Maybe it can undo what it did.”

He had no idea where his sword was now. Sheyna had taken it ‘for his own good’ and didn't seem to be planning on giving it back to him any time soon. That left him with only one option. He knew that when he had it before, he could just summon the sword from wherever it was, regardless of distance, until he lost it that is. After that, no matter how many times he tried to call the sword to him, it didn't come. That could have been Grindlewald's doing, or it could have been because someone else had the sword, either way he was going to try now and hope for results.

He stretched out his right hand and willed his sword to come to him. There was a flash of blue light and the sword appeared in his hand in all its blazing glory.

“Now what?” he wondered while examining the sword. He didn’t notice a drop of blood seep through the bandages on his chest and land on the blade. He did however, notice when the sword glowed a pale green color and bathed him in a warm light that immediately caused all the wounds made by the sword to heal. He also felt the effects of the other spells and potions that had been held back by the block on the sword. Unfortunately some of those potions were Dreamless Sleep as well as a few other sedatives and pain relievers. The combination of so many medicines helped heal all Harry’s other wounds, but it also brought him to a fitful sleep.

...

Kuja crawled along the cave floor, barely able to pull himself towards the large stone doors only meters a head of him. He knew what he was looking for, and he also knew that it was right through those doors. It was so close, yet so far. If only he could move his legs again.

“Damn you Harry Potter!” He seethed through clenched teeth.

Ever since his battle with the young wizard, he’d been slowly deteriorating. He knew that the body Zidane gave him had its limits, and unless he found a new source of power, he’d soon find himself right back in hell, and going back there was not an option. For going back to hell meant facing Sephiroth, the self proclaimed lord of the underworld, and Sephiroth just plain scared him.

Using the thoughts of his possible torture as motivation to keep going, he managed to get a whole two meters closer to the door before collapsing once again. He felt his body begin to tingle and he knew that the end was near.

“Not like this!” he roared defiantly

“Look’s that way.” said an amused voice from above him.

“What are you doing here Zidane?” asked Kuja dejectedly

“You’re giving up?” asked Zidane “After all your plotting to undermine me and take over the world, you just give up when you’re this close to being more powerful than ever before?”

“I’ll be gone in less than five minutes and you know it.” said Kuja “There’s nothing I can do about it either, so I just have to accept it.”

“How mature of you.” said Zidane “Last time you died you cried like a baby and decided to take everyone with you.”

“People change” said Kuja

“Well, last time you had nearly godlike power when you were about to die” said Zidane “And now, well... you don’t”

“ Why did you come here anyway?” asked Kuja “You’re not supposed to be here and you know they won’t like it much.”

“I figure I’m already breaking their stupid rules to begin with, that and I don’t care what they think in the first place.” said Zidane “As for why I’m here, I don’t want you to die just yet, I know what you’re trying to do, and I’m going to help you do it.”

“What?” asked Kuja, surprised, Zidane had clearly lost his mind, why would he help him of all people, but then again, he’d done it before.

“Well maybe not you but your body anyway.” said the blonde Genome cryptically

“What do you mean?” said Kuja, his body starting to fade slightly.

“It’s easier to show you” replied Zidane, then he shot a beam of orange light right at Kuja’s chest.

The mage shuddered in pain as the dark energy coursed through his body. He suddenly began to feel incredibly light headed and with that feeling, the pain went away. He was now only vaguely aware of his

body and his surroundings, and it felt as though someone else were now in control.

“Luckily for you, your parasite has other ties that keep him bound to this world.” said Zidane “As long as you let him keep control of your body, you won’t disappear, unless his counterpart dies, which is unlikely.”

“This is a wonderful gift Zidane, but don’t think I feel indebted to you.” said Kuja’s voice, but with a tinge of someone else’s mixed in.

“Wouldn’t dream of it Tom.” said Zidane, emphasizing the last word in order to annoy the soul fragment of the Dark Lord. “Just get the Aeon and do whatever makes you happy for now. If I need something I’ll ask, and believe me, you will do it if I ask.”

“We shall see.” said parasite, unafraid.

“For your sake it would be better if it didn’t come to that.” said Zidane, he then disappeared before the parasite could form a reply.

Annoyed, but not undaunted, the parasite managed to drag the broken body up to the doors and up onto his feet. Opening the doors was a hassle, but the task was soon complete and he slowly made his way inside the temple. The first room was a wide atrium with statues of several Aeons on either side of the walkway. Each Aeon had a glyph underneath them and all the glyphs were glowing slightly in different colors. He walked to the far end of the room and up to a single stone door. He placed a hand on the door and the whole room lit up suddenly in a brilliant flash. When the light dimmed the door was no longer there so he headed to the next room.

This room contained a large statue of yet another Aeon, this one had bandages wrapped around most of its face, leaving only one eye and the mouth uncovered. The creature had two savage looking arms across its chest and they were held in place by heavy looking chains and manacles. The rest of the monster’s body was covered by a shell that held spikes along the insides and trapped the creature into place, along with more chains. The whole predicament looked painful, and the expression on the Aeon’s face further illustrated this fact.

“Anima...” said the parasite, drawing on Kuja’s knowledge to identify the Aeon “The most powerful Dark Aeon. So feared that King Bahaumut had you imprisoned unjustly to subdue you. Such a waste of power.”

He walked up the statue and unsteadily knelt before it. He placed his hand on the large rune drawn around the statue and began chanting a mantra.

“Dark Aeon of pain, here my plea, let me free you from your plight, I can end your suffering and help you bring justice to those who condemned you to this hell. Help me and I will help you.”

He repeated this several times, and each time magic surged around the room. Soon the chamber was awash with colors and a disembodied voice filled the room.

“I have lived this way for so long...” said a hoarse sounding female voice “To be free is my only desire, can you set me free?”

“Yes” said the parasite eagerly “I can give you freedom and so much more.”

“So be it.” said the Aeon

The statue’s only visible eye glowed red and a beam hit Kuja in the center of his chest. Energy began to surge into him as the Aeon granted him the use of her power. Soon the chamber was filled with cold laughter as the newly revitalized, parasite controlled mage, began to formulate his next move.

...

It was a quiet afternoon in a city known as Eden’s Horizon, the city was located at the middle of a bridge between the Eshar continent and the Galbadian Mainland. The peaceful afternoon was broken by a large explosion near the center of the city, Garden Prime to be exact, the only stationary SeeD base on the planet, it was more like the center of government for all of Garden. People screamed in fright

as the building was blown apart by a massive beam of purple energy. A dark shape floated above the city, laughing coldly at his handiwork.

SeeDs rushed out of the collapsing structure, weapons drawn and spells at the ready. As they came out, they were hit with a deadly barrage of ice spikes being hurled at them by the unknown assailant. Some of them managed to avoid being hit, but others weren't so lucky. The ground was soon covered in blood from the many wounds inflicted by the deadly shards. All the while, the dark figure laughed at the plight of his former comrades.

One of the SeeDs that had avoided being killed cast a Flare spell on the floating psychopath. The spell connected and when it dissipated the glowing purple figure was still standing, unharmed.

"Pathetic" said Antym mockingly "Is this all SeeD has to offer?"

"Dark Messenger!" yelled someone from behind him, he turned just in time to see one of the SeeDs vanish, only to be replaced by a multitude of small black demons that looked very similar to bats. The demons flew into one central point, forming a ball of inky blackness several meters in diameter. Something began to emerge from the bottom of the black void, a tall demonic figure with large red and black wings landed on the ground below the ball of energy, it put one of its scaly hands into the void and began to combine its own energy with it. The sky became overcast with a dark purple haze and it appeared as though the ball of blackness had combined with the atmosphere itself. All this happened in the span of only a few seconds, giving Antym little time to dodge the incoming attack.

The demon thrust the distorted matter at the crazed ex-Knight, crushing him with the force of over one thousand times normal gravity. Under normal circumstances, this attack would have killed him almost instantly, but with Griever being mostly in control and taking the brunt of the damage, combined with the awesome power from the dark Trance, the attack did little more than irritate him.

With the attack completed, the demon disappeared into a multitude of smaller demons before the sky returned to normal and a terrified but determined SeeD appeared in its place. The young mercenary

rushed toward the recovering ex-Knight, hoping to do some damage before he fully recovered. He wielded a normal revolver gunblade and brought it down, aiming for Antym's chest. The blow was blocked by Antym's raised arm, the SeeD had already pulled the trigger, and the added force behind the blow caused it to recoil, shattering in the process. The stunned SeeD didn't even get time to wonder at how that had happened, as he was impaled through his head by one of the pieces of his gunblade.

The carnage continued until most of the garden was a charred ruin. Some SeeDs were left alive after being thoroughly beaten by one of their former comrades. They all were given one simple message to tell the other SeeDs.

"I won't stop until I find Dinch and kill him with my bare hands."

...

Sheyna walked into the room containing the comatose Andrea and immediately noticed a change in the room, namely, Andrea was sitting up in bed looking around frantically. Upon seeing Sheyna, she lunged for her, catching the Lunarian off guard and tackling her to the floor. They scuffled around a bit, until Sheyna finally managed to overpower the weakened SeeD and hold her to the floor.

Andrea struggled to get up, but she was just too weak. Finally she let out a frustrated sigh and reluctantly stopped trying to break free.

"Alright do it." was all she said

"Do it?" asked a confused Sheyna

"You're sick you know that?" she said bitterly

"I still don't know what you're talking about." said Sheyna "But I can't stay here and hold you down all day, Harry banded himself up pretty badly trying to save you from the sorceress, and a simple Curaga won't do it this time."

“What?” said Andrea, now looking puzzled, then she seemed to shake herself and simply glared at Sheyna

Not knowing what else to do, Sheyna answered her question “You’ve been here for about two weeks now, you were at the tower for at least a month, although it might have been longer since we kind of lost track of time trying to find you. From what I got from Harry, you were somehow already fighting the sorceress when he found you, he fought her knight and beat him, but then she made him go into trance and that pretty much ended the battle.”

“Is she dead?” asked Andrea

“The sorceress? Yeah, she’s dead, Harry said you killed her.”

“I...” said Andrea before shaking her head and letting out a moan of pain

Sheyna helped her up and onto the bed. Andrea sat with elbows resting on her thighs and her head in her hands. At first Sheyna thought she was crying, but upon closer inspection she was simply messaging her temples and shaking her head every so often.

“Are you alright?” asked Sheyna worriedly

“Just leave me alone.” was the dead reply

“Alright, I’ll be back in a little while, if you need something just come and find me.” she then left the room, closing the door gently behind her. Before she left the door, she thought she heard a muffled snuffle, but she wasn’t sure. She made her way to Harry’s room and once inside, the sight she saw, made her stop dead in her tracks.

Harry was lying on the bed with his sword clutched loosely in left hand which was hanging off the bed. His bandages were also gone and there was no trace of any wounds on him whatsoever. In fact, the only thing out of the ordinary with him was the fact that his scar was pulsing slightly with a soft red glow and a tiny stream of blood with trickling from it.

“What did you do?” she asked the sleeping wizard. As expected no answer came, so she attempted to wake him up. She shook him gently at first while calling him, then more forcibly to the point where she was nearly throttling him. Seeing that this didn’t work, she took out her pistol and fired three shots into the air hoping the noise would rouse him. She checked his vital signs and everything seemed normal. He simply appeared to be in a deep sleep.

She thought about any other ways to wake him up, and figured she’d just let him rest and inquire about his miraculous recovery later, but just to make sure he wasn’t just faking it to avoid questioning she leaned over and kissed him full on the lips, once again there was no response at all, so she figured he was most likely not faking it. She left the room wondering what he would do if he knew she’d just done that, knowing him, he’d probably write it off as just teasing, and if he kept that attitude up much longer she’d just go for the direct approach once and for all.

...

Several hours had passes since Andrea had awoken and she still didn’t know what to think. When she’d woken up she had expected to still be chained to the wall in Mia’s tower. Instead she’d found herself in a very comfortable bed in a modestly furnished room. Then a few minutes later the door opened and Sheyna walked in. That was unexpected, but she figured it all had to be another trick and she wasn’t falling for it. That was when she attacked and after being bested quickly in her weakened state, she’d had no other choice but to go along with it like every other time.

But instead of hurting her or dragging her away she’d just held her down looking alarmed and confused. Then after Andrea prompted her to do it, she just acted more bewildered. That was when the SeeD started to think that maybe it wasn’t another trick, but she quickly squashed that hope, knowing that hoping just made it harder.

After Sheyna explained what had supposedly happened to her she was even more uncertain of what to believe, especially when the images started to come to her, supporting what Sheyna had said. The one thing that stood out though was that she’d killed the sorceress, if

what she remembered was true, then she'd gotten her revenge. But it was too good to be true. They'd done this before, made her think she'd gotten out when she hadn't, she wouldn't let them do that again, the memories were just put there by Mia to confuse her.

She had expected the charade to end soon, but it didn't. Sheyna simply helped her onto the bed and left her alone like she'd asked. Every other time she pleaded for them to leave her alone, they didn't, they just kept on doing whatever it was they wanted to do, but not this time. This time they were going to lure her into a false sense of security and then take it away. Any minute now it would be over. That's what she told herself as she tried to ignore the growing clarity of the memories from the battle. After several hours she really began to get on edge and began pacing the room.

Her eyes fell on the door and she wondered if they'd left it unlocked, it was worth a try. She turned the knob and was surprised when the door actually opened. She walked out and found herself in a hallway that went left and right, her room was closer to the left end of the hallway, so she decided to go that way first then go back the other way if she didn't find anything.

She eventually came across a door that was slightly ajar and voices were coming from inside. One sounded like Sheyna and the other was Harry.

"You did what!" yelled Sheyna "How could you do something so...so....stupid?"

"I was bored?" said Harry lamely

"So the fact that you could barely walk and had a gaping wound in your chest that was gushing blood every two hours, plus a multitude of other injuries didn't cross your mind?" asked Sheyna

"I thought about it afterwards." said Harry "I didn't think he'd catch me in there anyway, if I had thought that, then I wouldn't have done it, but I'm fine now so don't worry about it."

"So that's all you're going to say?" she asked expectantly

“What else is there to say?” responded Harry “I thought you’d be glad I’m healed so you don’t have to play nurse for me anymore, but all you do is scold me like some child.”

“You could have died!” yelled Sheyna

“But I didn’t” said Harry

Sheyna let out a frustrated huff and left the room, not even noticing Andrea standing outside the doorway. Before she was out of hearing, Andrea heard her mutter something along the lines of “stupid asshole” and then she had entered one of the other rooms in the hallway slamming the door.

If this was really all a trick, Mia was going all out. She decided that if she wanted any answers then she’d need to talk to ‘Harry’ or whoever it was impersonating him. She went through his still open door and found him sitting on the bed in the middle of the room with his back turned towards the door.

“Here to yell at me some more for being reckless?” he asked bitingly

“I want answers” was all Andrea said

“Huh?” Harry said confused

“What the hell is going on here? I know this has to be a trick, so why don’t you people just get on with it already.” said Andrea coldly

“I thought you were still unconscious.” said Harry “And I really don’t know what you mean by ‘get on with it’ either.”

“Like I’m going to buy that.” said Andrea “You people disgust me.”

“Just what do you think is going on then?” said Harry

The question only served to make Andrea angry. They were going to keep up their little act until the end.

“It’s all a trick” said Andrea “She’s done it before, I won’t fall for it again, so stop playing games and show me who you really are.”

“I’m Harry Potter” said Harry “Who else am I supposed to be?”

She even dignify that with a response

“Look, Andrea, I’m still not sure what you think is happening to you, but this isn’t a trick.” said Harry “But I can take a guess, you aren’t with the sorceress anymore, I don’t know how to get you to believe that, but it’s the truth.”

Andrea mentally seethed, if they were going to play this game, that left her with only one option, she’d have to play along, for now, and hopefully find a way to get out the next chance she got. Not that there would be one, she knew that as soon as she accepted that it was real, as soon as she let that small glimmer of hope inside her brighten, Mia would appear and crush it, just like every other time and she wasn’t letting that happen again.

“She’s really gone then?” she asked, trying to sound as hopeful and desperate as she could, which wasn’t too hard considering.

“Yeah, you killed her.” said Harry “I was too busy fighting her knight, the bastard gave me right beating at the end there. I barely managed to make a portkey from his gunblade and get us out.”

“His gunblade?” asked Andrea “And what’s a portkey?”

“Last question first, a portkey is a means of magical transportation from where I’m from.” He explained “And yeah, his gunblade, I knocked it out of his hand during the fight and somehow you had picked it up. It’s what you killed Mia with.”

The little bit of hope inside her started to grow at this comment, but she quickly squished it down. It was all a trick. But if it was a trick, how did they know about ‘portkeys’? The simple answer was that they were simply making things up to confuse her. There was also one question she could ask that she knew he wouldn’t be able to answer if this was a trick.

“Where did her powers go?” she asked him

“Her powers?” said Harry “To tell you the truth I don’t know, I was kind of hoping you could tell me, but if you don’t remember then I guess we’ll have to wait and see if another one pops up anytime soon. Where do they usually go anyway?”

“They would usually go to the nearest female that could accept them.” said Andrea

“There was only you at the tower then.” said Harry “Do you think maybe they...”

“No!” said Andrea forcibly but with a little bit of panic creeping into her voice “I didn’t get them I haven’t had any of the signs.”

“Not that I don’t believe you or anything” began Harry “But you’ve been unconscious for the last two weeks, what kind of signs are there?”

“Extreme exhaustion, magical instability, sometimes illness and in some cases a short term coma.” said Andrea, automatically retorting what she’d learned in her training

“Well, you look exhausted, your magic is fluctuating and it’s a lot higher than it was, and you’ve been in a coma for the last two weeks, sound familiar?”

“I am not a sorceress!” she screamed desperately. At the same time she felt a surge of power run through her and her hand automatically thrust toward Harry, sending a bolt of fire at his head, he easily avoided it and the fireball hit the wall, leaving a black scorch mark in its wake.

Andrea stared at the spot wide eyed. She should not have been able to do that. She didn’t have Quetzacoatl anymore, and she didn’t have any materia and she’d never been able to cast magic without either a GF or materia before. That meant that Harry must be right, maybe she did get the Mia’s powers, but if that were true, then she really

wasn't being played by Harry and Sheyna and it really was them and not imposters under the sorceress' command. She really didn't know what to think so she simply ran out of the room just wanting to be alone again to sort her thoughts.

...

"Looks like you're on a roll, Harry." said Seth "That's two women you've sent storming out of your room in less than an hour."

"Shut up you overgrown worm." said Harry

"Hey!" said Seth "I resent that, a worm could never look this good. All joking aside though, what are you going to do?"

"No idea" said Harry "I can understand why Sheyna is mad, but its really not that big of a deal, I'm fine. And as for Andrea, she's definitely a sorceress, I just hope she can accept that and get past it."

"She's going to need a knight." said Seth "The power will consume her otherwise and she could end up just like Mia was."

"We'll have to find her one then." said Harry "Maybe once we find the others Ethan or Bastian can do it, but until then we'll just have to try and keep her grounded."

"Couldn't you do it?" asked Seth "Not that I'm saying you should or anything, just wondering why you didn't even consider it."

"From what little I know about it, the bond created by a sorceress and knight is a very deep intimate bond. I don't think Andrea trusts me enough to even think about doing it with me, plus I won't be here too much longer."

"Where exactly are you going." asked Seth

"Home" said Harry "After Kuja's been dealt with I'm going to really start looking, I know I promised Bastian I'd help him free Spira, and I'll help whatever way I can, but I'm going to start looking for a way back too."

“Well that’s one reason for not doing it I guess.” said Seth

“But if worse comes to worse, and she’s willing, I guess I would.” said Harry “She is my friend after all and I don’t want to see her end up a psychopath.”

“Well sitting here talking to me won’t solve your problems, you’ve got two people to find and both of them probably don’t want to see you right now.”

“You’re right, I’d better get it over with.” said Harry

He made his way out of his room and around the large dwelling until he found Sheyna sitting in the kitchen with a cup of coffee. She glanced at him but didn’t make any other indication that she’d noticed him and merely ignored him while drinking her coffee.

“Look, I’m sorry about earlier.” he began “I understand why you were mad and I’ll try not to worry you so much next time.”

“Do you really understand, Harry” she asked, finally looking at him “I don’t think you do, I wasn’t mad that you worried me, I was mad that you did it in the first place, then you just do all these reckless things and don’t even think about them until after. You could have died, but you act like it doesn’t matter.”

“It really isn’t that big of a deal.” said Harry “I’ve been doing these kinds of things all my life and I haven’t died yet.”

“But what if the next time you aren’t so lucky?” asked Sheyna

“Then I’ll be dead.” said Harry “I’m not afraid of death, it happens to everyone and if the next time is my time then that’s just the way it is.”

“That’s how you really feel isn’t it?” she said sadly

“It’s the truth” said Harry

"It isn't that simple!" Sheyna nearly shouted "What do you think will happen if you die?"

"Never really gave it much thought" said Harry honestly "I always just figured I'd be dead, so it wouldn't matter."

"Maybe not to you." said Sheyna "But what about everyone else, what about me? If you died, Harry, I'd have no one left, not really. Sure I have a couple friends but not like you, you're different, I don't know what I'd do if you died, but lately that's what you've been almost doing, and you don't even value your own life."

"I'm not doing it intentionally to hurt you." defended Harry "Its hard for me to change something that I've been doing all my life, I'd prefer it if I wasn't always in danger, but as long as there are people out there trying to kill me, I'm going to have to try and be one step ahead of them instead of just reacting all the time like I've been doing. I did manage to unsettle Tom some with that stunt I pulled, and even though I had to take a Crucio to get it, I don't regret it. If it's any consolation I was trying to break into Kuja's mind, I just got side tracked."

"I just wish you'd realize that there's more to life than killing the bad guy." said Sheyna

"Not for me" said Harry "I can't afford to enjoy my life like everyone else, I have things to do."

"Life isn't about enjoying yourself, its about being alive and making every moment as fulfilling as possible, know that you lived on your own terms so that if you die tomorrow at least you died living how you wanted to live. If you dedicate yourself to killing Kuja, Volde-whatever or whoever else threatens you, then you already give them a victory, they may not kill you, but they're still taking your life from you."

That comment made Harry pause, he had been doing that, letting everyone else dictate how he did things, rooting his life around what everyone expected or doing what he believed others wanted. He had returned to the Dursleys because Dumbledore had wanted it, he had tried to shut everyone out because of Voldemort, he had decided to

quit school because of Voldemort and because he thought Dumbledore would have wanted him destroying the other Horcruxes. He'd let the Dursley's destroy his self confidence and it was also because of them that he always felt like he was worthless. All of his inner demons were dictating how he lived instead of him dictating how he let them effect him.

"You're right." he said finally "I won't guarantee that I won't ever do things that will put me in danger, but I will start trying to enjoy my life more, maybe I won't be so reckless with my life if I do."

"I can accept that." said Sheyna "I know I can't change you, but I'm glad you're open to reason. I'm glad your feeling better too, how did that happen anyway?"

"I thought since the sword was responsible for the injuries, it might have the key to healing them, so I just thought about having the sword and then I had it, so I thought about healing my wounds and they were healed, but then the effects of those potions started to kick in, and it knocked me out."

"Only you Harry" said Sheyna smiling "It was that simple all this time, and you just now thought of it today."

"You didn't think of it either." said Harry

"I was busy taking care of you and Andrea, it wasn't my job to think of everything." said Sheyna "Speaking of which, you know she woke up today?"

"I ran into her, well she more like came into my room after you left demanding answers." said Harry "I think believes that me and you are just figments of her imagination and that Mia is just messing with her head. I tried to explain things to her, but then we got into where Mia's powers went and things got a little out of hand."

"She didn't attack you did she?" asked Sheyna

"Not intentionally, at least it didn't look that way." said Harry "Based on what she said, I gathered that she must have gotten the power,

but she freaked out and launched a fireball at my head, then she bolted and I haven't seen her since.

"It's a lot to take in." said Sheyna "She's been trained for almost half her life to contain sorceresses or even kill them if necessary, so this has to be even harder on her. We should probably just leave her alone other than making sure she at least takes care of herself. and be there if she wants to talk to us, but I doubt she will."

"She's always been a pretty independent person, and we aren't really her good friends, all of them are...somewhere....alive....hopefully."

"Since you're fine now we can start looking for them." said Sheyna

"But we've got no idea where they are, or even if they're alive." said Harry "I'm not saying we shouldn't look, I'm just saying I don't know where to start."

"Well we'd need a means to look first, and for that we need transportation, and the best way I can think of is an airship." said Sheyna

"Where would we get one of those." said Harry

"Limblum" said Sheyna "I'm sure we can get a small one there, especially with all the gil you managed to get from killing so many fiends. Your EFC account was colossal."

"I can get us there if you or Andrea has been there." said Harry "If you let me look at the memory, I can make portkey for us."

"I've never been there." said Sheyna "So you'll have to ask Andrea, and I don't think she's feeling too generous right now."

"I won't know until I try." said Harry "But I'll leave her alone right now, I wouldn't want to use Legilimancy on her right now anyway."

"Well, I've had a long day and I'm going to take a nap, I'll see you later, Harry." She walked around the table and over to Harry, she

seemed to think about something before wrapping her arms around Harry and hugging him tightly, he hugged her back, but then she did something that took him completely by surprise, she kissed him. His momentary shock was overridden by his desire and he began kissing her back without a second thought. They stayed there in the kitchen kissing passionately for some time until they finally broke for air.

“What was that for?” asked Harry

“Do I need a reason?” asked Sheyna

“Not particularly” said Harry “But I’ve wanted to do that for a while now.”

“Why didn’t you?” asked Sheyna

“It would make things complicated.” said Harry “I want this, I really do, but...”

“What did you just finish saying Harry?” asked Sheyna “I don’t care that you’re an offworlder or that your going to have to go home one day, it doesn’t change how I feel or what I want.”

“What about when I have to leave?” asked Harry quietly “This’ll just make it harder.”

“I’ll just go with you.” said Sheyna

“I couldn’t ask you to do that.” said Harry “This is your home, my world is on the brink of war right now and if what I saw is any indication, things are going to get worse before they get better, I couldn’t bring you to that.”

“And I couldn’t let you go back into something like that alone.” said Sheyna “I don’t have anything to keep me here, I go where you go, remember? I love you Harry, I have for a while now, and if you think you’re just going to leave me then you’d better think again.”

“I love you too, Sheyna.” said Harry “If you really want to go with me when I find a way to leave, then I won’t stop you, its just that I don’t

know for sure what we'll be walking into, and now with the fiends, Voldemort antagonizing an ancient vampire clan, and the Muggles knowing about the magical world, things are bound to be crazy."

"Well we'll have to go one step at a time." said Sheyna "We've still got to find the others, kill Kuja and then we have to start looking for a way back to your world before the merger completes. I know it sounds simple, but actually doing it is going to be something different entirely."

She finally let go of him and began to leave the kitchen, Harry decided that he'd let her rest and went off to kill some fiends in the surrounding desert. Since he was now fully recovered they were no match for him, only a few of them managed to even hit him and those were only glancing blows. When he returned to the cavern five hours later, he didn't even need a Cure spell.

He was tired though and wanted to rest again. He supposed that his stamina still had to recover even if his overall power was back at its maximum. When Harry opened his room door he found that his bed already had an occupant, Sheyna was fast asleep with the covers pulled over her and she appeared to be resting peacefully. Shrugging, Harry simply stripped off his outer clothes and climbed in with her. He pulled her close to him and soon he found himself drifting off into a peaceful slumber knowing that the hard work began the next day.

...

A/N: That took a lot longer than I thought it would to get done, I'm sorry for that, I have factors that keep me from working on this fic like I used to, that's why updates take so long now, I do get free time, but most of the time it gets interrupted so much that if I do try and write, my concentration gets broken and I end up stopping because I can't write a decent paragraph. Then sometimes I just can't write, I'll just stare at the screen knowing what I want to write, but I just can't formulate how to do it. I think I'm over the writer's block now though and I'll have the next chapter up sooner than this one was, it might even be less than a week, but I won't swear to that.

Land of Machines

Bastian lay on the cold hard cell floor lost in thought. Every day he began to loose hope that he'd ever make it out of the tower alive. The sorceress was a sadistic bitch, if he ever saw one, and she had no problem demonstrating that point to any of them. Thankfully though she'd been leaving him alone lately, but that only made him worry about what she may be doing to his friends.

He was drawn from his thoughts by the door opening and a group of people walking in, among them was Mia, and that just made Bastian more worried. The other people were Antym and a group of men dressed in pale green armor that made them resemble walking fish. They carried triton-like weapons and they were pointed right at Bastian.

"Get up!" ordered Mia "I have no further use for you, you'll be going with these nice Esharians I'm sure they'll take good care of you, Antym, see that they get there in one piece."

With his fate decided, the sorceress left to do whatever it was she did when she wasn't toying around with him. The soldiers grabbed him, and he didn't even bother trying to overpower them, he was outnumbered five to one and completely unarmed, fighting was probably suicide, and he couldn't afford to die quite yet.

He was led to a room with a large panel in the middle. The panel was in the shape of a circle and it had many intricate runes carved around it. Also in the room were more Esharian soldiers guarding Sophia and Ethan. Both of them were bound in the same fashion as Bastian was, with their hands behind their backs and manacles on their feet.

"Prepare for transport." said one of the soldiers in a strangely toneless voice

"Just a minute" said Antym suddenly "I'd like to show you something"

"This is not part of the directive" said the same soldier "Your services are no longer required, we shall begin transport now."

"This will only take a moment." said Antym before hurling a Thundaga spell at the soldier. The spell caused the soldier's armor to spark wildly and it jerked around haphazardly crashing into the other soldiers, Bastian and the others quickly got out of the way and a Thundaga spell destroyed the soldiers that had been surrounding them. There were three soldiers remaining and both cast Reflect on themselves to prevent the same fate that happened to their comrades. Unfortunately for them though, the time it took them to cast the spell was all Antym needed to draw his gunblade and close the distance between them. The soldiers' heads were quickly taken off by the gunblader and Bastian was surprised to see that there was no blood, but instead a thick blue substance which had a metallic sheen.

With all the soldiers taken care of, Antym quickly turned to the three remaining occupants, the three tried to take fighting stances, but due to the manacles and binds, they could do little more than stand and wait for the end. They waited for the inevitable battle, but it never came, instead, Antym sheathed his gunblade and addressed his three former friends.

"You're going to have about five minutes to get away from the touchdown point when you get to Eshar." he said, getting straight to the point. "I'm going to release your binds and give your equipment, I'd do more if I could, but I can't."

"What about Andrea?" asked Sophia "We're not leaving without her."

"You don't have a choice." said Antym "If I had it my way, you'd all be out of here, but it's not my way and I was given a direct order not to assist, go near, or communicate with Andrea in any way, fortunately for you, Mia forgot to give me direct orders concerning you all."

He walked over to one of the walls in the room and presses a hidden button, the wall slid aside revealing another room, Antym went inside and quickly returned with their weapons, Materia and GF stones.

"Stand on the teleporter and I'll remover your bonds, don't try anything stupid and I won't have to hurt you." said Antym, placing the equipment in the middle of the room on top of the circular panel.

The three of them did as they were told and stood around the pile of equipment, waiting to see what would happen next.

Antym pointed a small remote at each of them and their binds were released. Bastian immediately went for his sword and grabbed a random GF stone and green materia. He quickly junctioned the GF and found that it was Quetzacoatl. The materia turned out to be an Ice Materia and he quickly turned on Antym.

"I thought I said not to do anything stupid!" hissed Antym annoyed "Should have known you'd be the one to try it."

Before he could draw his own weapon, he had to dodge a crossbow bolt and an incoming Fira spell from Sophia and Ethan respectively. The knight sighed in frustration as he parried a blow from Bastian's sword and dove off the teleporter. He aimed the remote at the panel and the entire room lit up with a bright blue glow. The three resistance members tried to move, but they were rooted to the spot by an unseen force.

"I didn't want it to be like this." said Antym sadly "If she hadn't ordered me to make sure you made it to Eshar, I'd have tried to get you out some other way, but this is the best I could do."

"Why?" asked Bastian, not bothering to specify what he meant.

"It all comes down to orders." said Antym

"Who ordered you to become a knight then?" asked Bastian, not really looking for an answer, but he got one.

"Dincht" was the simple reply

"Wha-..." started Bastian, but he was cut off by the teleporter activating and taking him and the others away in a flash of bright blue light. Antym shook his head forlornly as he looked around the room, now filled with various cyborg body parts. He'd managed to get three of his friends out, and he knew he'd pay for it when Mia found out, which she always did, this would mean it would be even harder for him to get Andrea out and he wondered if he should have done things

differently. The answer was no of course, since they'd have been in for quite a nightmare if he'd have let them be taken by the soldiers. Knowing that there was nothing else for him to do but wait and hope for the best, the knight left the room to find his sorceress and most likely get tortured for helping his friends.

...

The group reappeared inside another room that looked far different than the first, for one, the panel was much larger, indicating that whoever controlled it from this side could transport a massive amount of people or things if they had the need. The most noticeable change though was the amount of machinery in the room, there appeared to be computers everywhere and there didn't appear to be a door to the room either.

"Where the hell are we?" wondered Bastian aloud

"I'd assume it's Eshar" said Ethan "If we trust what Antym said anyway."

"I don't trust a word that bastard said." said Bastian stubbornly "He was clearly lying about Admiral Dincht, the man would never order anyone to do that."

"Yes he would" said Sophia harshly

"How can you say that?" said Bastian "I know he kicked me out, but there was a lot of circumstantial evidence pointing to me."

"You were just a scapegoat Bastian, since he couldn't get Antym" said Ethan "But that's a conversation for later, I happen to think we should believe him since he did get us out of there."

"You're right." said Bastian "Now the question is, how do we get out? I don't see a door anywhere."

"There's a section of wall with no computers." said Sophia "We should probably check that out."

After quickly gathering the remaining materia and weapons, they made their way over to the one section of wall that was void of machines. When they came within a few feet of the wall, it slid aside automatically, letting them out of the room. They found themselves in a long corridor which appeared devoid of any doors, much like the last room had. The room happened to be at the end of the corridor, so they only had one way to go.

"We're bound to run into trouble." said Bastian quietly "Most likely more cyborgs, have a lightning spell ready."

The others nodded in agreement and they quietly crept down the hallway. They'd only walked three minutes when they ran into the first soldier. They had just turned a corner when the cyborg appeared out of another hidden door. Upon spotting the three humans, the cyborg let out a high pitched piercing sound and klaxons started blaring all over the building.

"Security breach in sector 2342-6, all available combat units respond immediately, detainment is preferred. Repeat: Security breach in sector 2342-6 all available combat units respond immediately, detainment is preferred." A mechanical female voice sounded along with the alarm.

Soldiers began pouring out of hidden doors all along the hallway and the three of them were quickly surrounded. They began blasting the cyborgs with Thundara and Thundaga spells and were doing considerable damage to them, until the cyborgs started casting Reflect on themselves and began firing plasma bolts from their tritons at the unlucky trio. The three of them quickly cast Protect spells to block the beams and began to fight back with their weapons at the closest cyborgs. Once they charged their weapons with lightning magic, they were able to quickly cut a path through the assembled cyborgs.

Unfortunately the quick skirmish had tired the already weary companions even more. After a week of being in Baron's prison followed by another week at the sorceress' keep, they barely had enough energy to keep running from the pursuing cyborgs. It was by sheer dumb luck that Ethan happened to brush against a section of

wall that was actually a door. Inside was what appeared to be a hanger. There were vehicles of all kinds all over the place and at the other end of the room was an opening to the desert outside.

“That ATV over there looks like a winner.” said Bastian, quickly hopping into the driver’s seat of the large armored ATV. Ethan hopped in beside him and Sophia vaulted into the backseat before quickly turning around and firing lightning charged bolts at the soldiers who were following them. It took a couple of seconds for Bastian to figure out how to start the ATV and in that time the soldiers had gotten to within meters of them, despite Ethan and Sophia’s efforts to halt their progress.

“Hurry up Bastian!” yelled Ethan before casting another Thundaga spell at a group of unprotected cyborgs.

“Almost got it.” said Bastian distractedly “There...let’s ride!” The ATV roared to life and Bastian quickly headed toward the open hanger doors, but they were quickly closing. He mashed the accelerator all the way to the floor, pushing the bulky vehicle to its limits. It was surprisingly fast for such a bulky vehicle, but it still only barely cleared the hanger doors before they closed behind them with a loud clank. Sophia and Ethan took the reprieve to catch their breaths and regain some of their spent energy.

“Where do we go from here?” asked Sophia

“Not sure.” said Bastian “Things haven’t really gone as I expected them to.”

“Yeah, but when have things ever gone the way you expect them to?” asked Ethan

“Good point.” said Bastian “This is all Sheyna’s fault.”

“You can be really daft sometimes Bastian.” said Sophia “You think she was doing what Kuja said willingly? Did you see the blank look in her eyes? And I could tell she was trying to fight it, but whatever it was, it was too strong for her to fight off.”

“Now that you mention it, I did wonder about that.” said Bastian “But I was a little preoccupied at the time recovering from being turned into a zombie, not to mention that weird thing with the Pyreflies.”

“I think that was what gave us that new Limit Break thing.” said Ethan “You think that was what they call Trance?”

“I don’t know what else it could be.” said Bastian “It takes a lot out of you, whatever it is.”

“Guys, we’ve got company!” yelled Sophia before firing another bolt at another ATV, the bolt bounced off the armor harmlessly, in spite of the lightning giving it more power. The ATV countered with a stream of heavy plasma bursts that would have done significant damage to the ATV if Bastian hadn’t dodged in the nick of time.

“How did they do that.” said Bastian hitting the unmarked buttons on the console in front of him. The vehicle suddenly picked up speed at an alarming rate as one of the buttons triggered the thrusters on the back of the ATV. The sudden increase in speed left the other ATV in far behind, the reprieve was short lived though, because no sooner had they lost sight of the pursuing cyborgs, then a squadron of twenty small aircrafts closed in on their position.

“We need to find the weapons fast!” exclaimed Ethan “They’re gonna blow us to pieces at this rate.”

“I’m trying” said Bastian before hitting another button, this time another console appeared in front of Ethan and the SeeD quickly studied it before hitting a series of buttons.

“This should arm the guns.” said Ethan before hitting another button and sending a stream of plasma bolts at the incoming aircrafts. The shots managed to take out two of the planes, but the others quickly scattered away from the attack and countered with one of their own. Bastian was hard pressed to dodge all of them and a few managed to impact the hull of the ATV.

“Any idea how to raise the top on this thing.” said Sophia nervously, having ducked when the plasma came raining down.

“Ethan?” asked Bastian in response

“This console’s only got weapons.” He hit another button and armed another plasma cannon, then he began a new barrage of plasma to combat the relentless assault coming from the air.

“I think this one should do it.” said Bastian before hitting the button and causing the ATV to come to a screeching halt. The planes kept on flying, unable to double back fast enough. “Wrong one.” said Bastian sheepishly “This one then” that button caused the ATV’s front thrusters to engage, sending the ATV back in the direction it had come.

“No not that way!” yelled Sophia “We’re going right back toward the other soldiers!”

Sure enough, a group of ATVs not unlike the one the group was riding in was closing in on them. To make matters worse, the planes had managed to change direction and were flying towards them as well.

“This isn’t good” said Ethan “I can’t hold them all off.”

“Only one thing to do then” said Bastian “We call for backup.”

“Will they be enough?” asked Sophia

“We don’t really have a choice” said Ethan “Pandamona, Tornado Zone!”

“Diamond Dust” said Sophia, calling Shiva forth to aid them.

“Let’s hope Quetzacoatl isn’t still pissed at me.” said Bastian “Thunder Storm!”

“No way human” said the thunderbird grudgingly “I don’t forget easily and I don’t think you really deserve my help.”

“Now isn’t really the time Quetzacoatl” said Carbuncle “If you don’t help him they’ll probably die.”

“Then he dies.” said the thunderbird “I have other junction stones, I’ll just transfer my consciousness to one of my copies.”

The other two GF had materialized and were already unleashing their fury on the surrounding army. The planes were tossed about by Pandamona’s whirlwinds and Shiva’s ice attacks were doing considerable damage to the ground forces, it still wasn’t enough though and as the Guardians disappeared, the remaining soldiers regrouped for one final assault.

“Come on Quetzacoatl, I promise I won’t ever take Leviathan’s side in an argument again.” pleaded Bastian “If you don’t help me I won’t be able to give you back to Andrea, and I thought you liked her.”

“Very well” said Quetzacoatl before materializing and letting loose a massive surge of lightning that caused the remaining ATVs and planes to explode due to overloaded systems. Quetzacoatl soared around a bit before dematerializing and retreating back to Bastian’s mind.

“I thought I was gonna have to sell it my soul for it to come out.” said Bastian

“That’s why they say not to junction two opposing GF, but you never did listen and it came back to haunt you.” said Sophia “But we can discuss this more later, we need to get out of here before more soldiers come after us.”

“Let’s go then” said Bastian before restarting the ATV and heading in a random direction.

...

several hours later the group had come no closer to finding civilization of any kind. Fortunately they hadn’t encountered anymore of the cyborgs, but in spite of this, recent events were starting to catch up with them and they were quickly growing exhausted.

"I don't think....I can drive...anymore." said Bastian drowsily.

"Just a little...further." said Sophia, repeating the same thing she'd said the last three times Bastian had made a comment.

"I'd like a...Zzz...large pizza...Zzz...double cheese..." droned Ethan in his sleep from the passenger seat.

Bastian's head suddenly went limp and his grip on the steering wheel slackened to the point where his hands lay limp at his sides, his body arched forward and his head was soon resting on the steering wheel, his right foot was still on the accelerator though and the vehicle plowed onward, in spite of its sleeping occupants.

...

Bastian awoke from his dream with a start, it wasn't merely a dream, more like a bad memory of his SeeD qualification mission, even though that had been a disaster, he'd somehow made it into the ranks of SeeD in spite of the setbacks. His thoughts were interrupted when he realized that he was lying on some sort of medical table and he was no longer in the ATV as he last remembered. He also had a very bad headache.

Someone was immediately at this side upon noticing that he was awake and gently but firmly pushed him back down onto the medical table. The man had long black hair that went well past his shoulders, he had a handsome face and bright blue eyes. He looked to be around twenty-eight or twenty-nine and he had a muscular build fitting of a soldier. He wore a silver combat vest with a black T-shirt underneath and his pants looked to be the same material as the vest. He had no weapons to speak of, but Bastian got the feeling that there was more to this man than met the eye.

"You're exhausted, dehydrated and you've got some internal bleeding as well." said the man "you're lucky to be alive after the crash you had."

"Crash?" asked Bastian

"You plowed that ATV you were in right into one of the monuments at Tear's point, luckily for you the ATV absorbed most of the damage and you and your friends only came out with a few scrapes."

"Who are you, where am I and where are the others?" asked Bastian

"Name's Laguana, you're somewhere safe and you're friends are in other rooms like this one." said Laguana

"That name sounds familiar." said Bastian

"I was modeled after Laguana Liore," said Laguana "Or at least that's what my creator told me, didn't get to talk to her much before she deactivated me."

"Wait, you're a cyborg?" asked Bastian alarmed

"No, I'm an android" said Laguana "There's a big difference, cyborgs don't think, they just follow directions. Androids have free will, we can make choices and we can even feel emotion."

"You mean there're more of you?" asked Bastian

"Lots of us actually." said Laguana "But let's talk about you, why are there three humans here?"

"You mean there aren't any humans in Eshar?"

"Not many" said Laguana "There's a small settlement up north, if the cyborgs haven't found it anyway, and those are the only humans left on the continent."

"No wonder no one sees any Esharians in the outside world." said Bastian

"Where from the outside world are you from?" asked Laguana

"Hard to say" said Bastian "I was born in New Zanerkand, enrolled in Bessaid Garden, got kicked out of there and ended up in Lucca, the

place there got destroyed and I've been traveling around ever since.”
said Bastian

“You have contacts at Garden?” asked Laguana, almost hopefully

“Sorry, like I said I was kicked out, they wouldn't want anything to do with me, and even if they did, things have been weird at Garden lately. What about you, what exactly happened here?”

“Well, as you know Eshar or Esthar as it used to be called, was the leading country in technological advancement. After the Ultimecia incident, things weren't good for the country. Monsters were everywhere and even though the sorceress was dead, her minions weren't, and there was no one to come from the past and save us this time, so the government at that time commissioned for a new type of cyborg, more powerful and more capable than the older models.”

“They began manufacturing the new machines and soon, Eshar had a new army that quickly took care of the massive fiend problem, the trouble was that many of the fiends retreated to other parts of the planet. Shortly after that The Merger happened and the monsters spread over the newly formed planet.”

“But weren't there already fiends on the other worlds that merged?”
asked Bastian “This always confused me.”

“There were, but not like the ones out of Eshar, the fiends that were already present in other areas weren't as strong as the ones in Eshar, there were a few, but not like there was after the others spread. Anyway, Eshar decided since they inadvertently set loose the fiends, they should compensate whoever had to go out and kill them, that's when the Eshar Financial Committee was formed and the satellite tracking systems were upgraded to monitor all fiend activity.”

“Things were fine for a time, until someone released a virus into the central computer system. The thing took control of the cyborg army and began terminating the humans without discrimination for age, race or gender. The people tried to fight, but with the majority of the army being cyborgs, it was a losing battle. Things only got worse from there. The virus kept up appearances for the other countries,

making them believe that everything was fine in Eshar while it gradually isolated us from the rest of the world.”

“Then a couple centuries ago, I was reactivated, apparently I’d been in a sort of stasis pod inside the Sorceress’ Memorial. The other androids found me and we’ve been trying to overthrow the virus ever since, but it’s been tough going.”

“That explains so much” said Bastian “Everyone wondered why Eshar was so isolated, now I guess we know why, but why haven’t you tried contacting the outside world, surely you have communications equipment that could do it.”

“We tried, all we managed to get before the virus interrupted the signal was someone calling themselves Cirrus Strife, he wasn’t very sympathetic.” said Laguana

“Not surprising” said Bastian “That guys head of a ‘communications company’ and let’s just say that they’re into almost everything illegal and just use the company as a giant front, but lately they’ve been really aggressive.”

“More bad luck on our part then.” said Laguana “That was a few years ago anyway, we haven’t managed to infiltrate another facility with equipment to send a transmission that far again. It took a lot just to get it the last time.”

“I can guess” said Bastian “Those cyborgs are pretty resilient, the only reason we got out was because of our magic.”

“You can cast magic?” asked Laguana “That would definitely tip the odds in our favor, one of the big reasons we can’t do too much is because the cyborgs have a big cache of materia and they seem to know how to use it.”

“So what did you do with our materia?” asked Bastian

“Stored it.” said Laguana “That stuff is too dangerous to leave lying around, and we didn’t know exactly what to make of you three, how did you get into Eshar anyway?”

“Long story short, we got captured by a sorceress who somehow had connections here and she transported us here with a teleporter.” said Bastian

“Well, you’ve still got a long way to go before you’re fit to be going anywhere, so in the meantime you need to rest” said Laguana

“Can’t really do that on this hard table.” said Bastian

“Sorry, we androids don’t really need sleep and I don’t think you could use a recharge chamber too well.”

“What about food and water?” asked Bastian

“We don’t need water or food, but we can process them into fuel, so we do have some that should tide you over.”

“Why are you helping us, not that I’m not grateful, but it just seems like you’d be better off if you’d just left us to die.”

“We need all the help we can get, we’ve asked the humans here, but they don’t want anything to do with us, and the few that were willing to fight, have already died.” said Laguana sadly “Humans can use magic a lot better than machines can, and you three seem to be quite skilled with it if you made it out of a military compound with one of their own vehicles.”

“It wasn’t easy” said Bastian “We almost didn’t make it.”

“Well, you’re all safe now, and as soon as you’re friends wake up, we’ll see about getting you out of here.”

...

It was another two days before the Sophia and Ethan woke up. Bastian figured it was because they only had one GF each, making their recovery rate slower than his. Once they had been filled in on the situation they’d agreed to aid the androids in their quest to

liberate Eshar in exchange for the androids' aid in getting out of Eshar.

The first step for the humans though, was recovering their full strength, their detainment had put them in a bad state and even with the expert medical care from the androids, they were still in for at least a week long recovery. In the meantime they learned the ends and outs of the Esharian landscape and exactly what they'd be doing when they finally became ready for combat.

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It was a week later and the three humans were now fully recovered. The Androids had already pinpointed another facility with a satellite uplink. Using the uplink they would be able to send out a global distress signal and hope someone would help them, if not they'd be no worse than they were before. The only problem they would have, would be getting in and out with their lives.

They'd be traveling there in a small airship capable of holding up to only ten people comfortably. When asked why they couldn't just fly away and seek help, the androids said that it was because the borders were heavily militarized and any unauthorized aircrafts were destroyed upon sight. They'd tried a few times to get out but all of them had ended in failure and getting another airship was difficult to say the least.

They landed a few miles away from the facility outside the radar range of the cyborgs, it was going to be a long trek on foot, but it was the only way to go about such an operation. In addition to the three humans and Laguana were four other androids: Nappa was an android fashioned to look like a brunette female in her early thirties, Walt was an android who looked to be only around fifteen with dark skin and blond hair, Nomad was a tall and extremely bulky android that proudly professed to be built for combat, he looked like a man in his early forties with dark brown hair and a modest goatee, finally there was Dolph, he didn't even look human, more like an elf or goblin than anything else, he sported big pointy ears and was very short in stature maxing at only two-foot-four on his tiptoes, in spite of

his size though, he was very good at what he did, which he wouldn't go into detail on with the humans.

After a two hour hike the group came in sight of the weapon's facility that housed the satellite uplink. Laguana led them to the side of the gate furthest from the main entrance. Nomad simply ripped the titanium plated gate in half in an impressive show of brute force. While Nomad crushed the gate Dolph had done something with a small handheld computer that disabled the alarms. Using the new entrance the group of eight made their way to the large domed building.

"Alright, once inside our cover will immediately be blown, they'll probably have more than normal soldiers here, so be prepared for anything." said Laguana hurriedly "Nomad, make a door."

"Gladly" said the large android before punching the wall as hard as he could and making a large hole for them to get through.

There were no alarms, but there were loud footsteps heading their direction. Dolph hit some keys on his mini computer and a large metal shutter blocked off the part of the hallway the footsteps were coming from.

"That won't last long." said Dolph "They'll probably switch up the security protocol after that one, so we'll have to fight next time."

"How long?" asked Laguana

"Probably ten minutes before that breaks if they don't bring in anything better than normal soldiers." said Dolph

"Okay let's move!" ordered Laguana

They hustled through the building using Dolph's blueprints to guide them. They didn't run into much opposition which worried Bastian. His instincts were telling him that there should have been more soldiers, but he could only assume that whoever was in charge didn't think anyone could get this far. They finally made it to the communications room and quickly took out the guards inside. Before they could

access anything though there was a loud crash and a horde of cyborgs came running down the hallway towards their position. Many of the cyborgs fired off plasma beams from their tritons, but some carried large broad swords that were made out of an unfamiliar alloy to the three humans. Bastian attempted to match blades with one of them only to have his own sword cleaved in two. He barely dodged the blow suffering a deep gash along his chest in the process.

Sophia kept up a steady barrage of magic while Nappa and Laguna poured out plasma shots of their own from their respective weapons. Walt and Nomad were in the thick of things using all the combat weapons at their disposal to hold off the cyborgs. Ethan and Dolph were inside the communications room attempting to access the satellite uplink.

Bastian had managed to kill one of the sword wielding soldiers by overloading it with a Thundaga spell. He then took up the fallen cyborg's weapon and began to viciously lay waste to any of the cyborgs that got in his path. Things were going well until the reinforcements arrived. Two large shapes barreled through the remaining cyborgs and went straight for the intruders. The creatures had large bat-like wings and four large clawed hands. Metal was clearly visible on much of the monsters leaving only a few places of visible skin. The eyes had been replaced with optical sensors and the claws were made of the same metal as the soldiers' swords.

"They've got cyborg Elveret!" yelled Bastian in alarm "Normal ones are bad enough."

The winged fiend-cyborgs lunged at the group, one of them grabbing Walt by his head and viciously tearing him apart sending pieces of synthetic flesh, metal and fluid everywhere. The other tried to grab Nomad, but the large android blocked its attempts using his massive strength. Enraged by the fall of his comrade, Laguana began firing his plasma blaster for all it was worth, sending a constant stream of plasma on one of the monsters. Nappa did the same and Bastian and Sophia supported them with magic. The tide began to turn again, until five more Elveret entered the fray, Three of them ganged up on Nomad, taking him down and quickly tearing him apart.

“You bastards!” yelled Laguana while firing his gun. “Fall back, barricade the room!”

The four of them went into the room and sealed it shut, they knew it wouldn’t last long, but they hoped that it would be enough.

“How much longer Dolph?” asked Nappa

“Almost got it...there!” said Dolph “We’re in, now all you have to do is start talking, Laguana.”

Laguana walked over to the console and began talking. “This is the Eshar Liberation Coalition, this is an emergency distress call for anyone willing to help, Eshar has been in an iron grip of the Odine Virus since a few centuries after the merger. The human population is at an all time low and cyborgs are running a much around the country. It’s only a matter of time before they decide to spread their influence, so we’re begging for any and all aid.”

“They’re breaking through!” yelled Bastian “Get ready to summon guys!”

“Please, anyone, we’re in deep shit here, and we really need a hand.”

“Transmission being interrupted!” exclaimed Dolph “Attempting to maintain control, too late they’ve blocked me out, let’s get out of here!”

As soon as the words left the little android’s mouth, the door and the surrounding wall collapsed revealing twelve cyborg-Elveret

The three humans quickly summoned their GF with Quetzacoatl only needing minimal coaxing this time. With the distraction provided by the GF’s the group managed to escape through a hastily made door in the other side of the room. The mission had been a success, in spite of having lost two team members, now all they had to do was make it back to the ship and back to their base and wait for a response.

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A/N: I actually finished this chapter within a couple days of posting the last one, but I didn't want to post it until the next chapter was done, problem is the next chapter turned out to be really long, 10k+ words actually, and I still have a little more to add to it to make it done, but since I held this one out long enough I decided to just update. Hope you guys enjoyed it, even if it didn't focus on Harry. There'll be plenty in the next chapter though, so don't worry. And the whole thing about the android looking like Laguana will be explained too. Oh and please remember to review people, I haven't said that in a couple chapters 'cause I don't want to sound like I'm nagging you, but they really do make writing the chapters worth while when I know people liked it, or even disliked it.

Hunter's Chance

Harry had been doing his best to keep his distance from Andrea in order to give her time to adjust to her new circumstances, he'd left it up to Sheyna to make sure that the other woman was taking care of herself, and based on what she'd told him and what little he'd seen, she was adjusting as well as could be expected. She didn't talk much, not that that was something new, but now she'd barely utter a complete sentence throughout the course of the day. But now he figured that enough time had passed and he really needed to start searching for the others, he'd been the one to lead them to the Iafa Tree and he'd been the one who let himself be trapped down there and leaving them to fend for themselves outside.

He found her in her usual place, staring off into the desert through the open entrance. She hadn't gone out there, but she just stood there looking at nothing in particular. Harry cautiously walked up next to her and looked at the desert with her. They remained in silence for a while until Andrea finally spoke.

"I don't know why I received these powers." she said quietly "At first I thought this was some kind of nightmare and I'd eventually wake up and still be in that room on that wall, but it hasn't happened yet."

"I'm sorry about that." said Harry "I should have been watching Sheyna more closely, I knew something was off with her, but I just ignored it, I did the same thing with another friend of mine, I'm just glad Sheyna came out of it better than him."

"What happened to him?" Andrea asked

"Last I knew, he was sharing his body with Voldemort, but I think he's using it to his advantage now." said Harry

"From what you said about Voldemort I don't see how there could be any advantages to sharing a body with him." said Andrea

"Ron somehow found a way to make the best of it, I just hope I find a way to separate them before I have to kill Tom, I don't want to kill Ron." said Harry sadly

“You’ll think of something” said Andrea

“So how are you doing, Andrea?” asked Harry changing the subject
“And I want a real answer and not the standard ‘I’m fine’.”

Andrea visibly tensed and Harry mentally smacked himself, he’d never been good at these things and he knew that demanding answers usually got you nowhere.

“I’m dealing with it.” said Andrea

“Have you tried using your powers again?” asked Harry

“No” said Andrea simply

“Why not?” said Harry “You should learn to control them, with that much power, if you don’t get a grasp on it, when you feel a high emotion the power will act on it’s own, and I know you don’t want that.”

“So I start using it and let it consume me?” said Andrea “Then I’ll end up like Mia and a bunch of other sorceresses throughout history.”

“How do you know you’ll end up like that?” asked Harry

“I don’t have a knight, if I use the power too much it’ll start to alter the way I think.” said Andrea “I already hear it whispering to me, it’s not in any language I’ve ever heard, but I still know what it means. It wants me to embrace the power and let it flow, but I can’t do that, not unless I get a knight.”

“It’s that important huh?” said Harry “I knew a sorceress needed one, but I thought you had a little time before it got too bad.”

“I just don’t want to take that chance. I refuse to be like here.” said Andrea before quickly changing the subject “We need to find Ethan and the others.”

“About that.” said Harry “We need an airship and Sheyna thinks we should go to Limblum, what do you think?”

“It would be the best place.” said Andrea “How would we get there?”

“I could make a portkey, but I’ve never been there.” said Harry “Have you?”

“A few times in passing.” said Andrea “Why do you ask?”

“I could pull the image from your mind and use it to make us a portkey, but I don’t want to do it without your permission.” said Harry

Andrea tensed again before taking a deep breath and relaxing slightly “You just want an image of the city right?” she asked softly

“If you have a memory of somewhere secluded, it would be nice.” said Harry

“I think I’ve got a good place.” said Andrea

“Alright, you ready?” said Harry

“Just the memory and out okay?” said Andrea

“Don’t worry, I won’t pry.” said Harry “You might feel a little tingle.”

Harry looked into her eyes and began to use his Legilimancy to scan her surface thoughts, he immediately got the image of an alleyway in a crowded city. He quickly pulled out of her mind and she was still looking at him expectantly

“Well?” she asked

“What?” asked Harry

“Aren’t you going to do something?” she said

“I already got it.” said Harry

"But I didn't feel anything." said Andrea

"Well it's done, so as soon as I find Sheyna we can get going," said Harry "Where is she anyway?"

"She went off into the desert about an hour ago, said something about needing target practice."

"You mean she went off into the desert by herself?" said Harry a bit worriedly, he knew all too well how tough the fiends were around here. "I'm going to find her before she lands herself in something she can't handle."

"I think she can take care of herself." said Andrea unconcerned

"Still, I'd feel better if I was there." said Harry

"You worry too much, I'm sure-..." her words were cut off by a loud sonic boom reverberating some distance away. Harry wasted no time in heading toward the source of the sound and Andrea followed him, curious as to what made the noise.

They had gone a quarter mile from the cavern when a horde of fiends came charging towards them, desert wolves and sand lizards as well as a few sand worms and Antilions were in the mix as well. Harry took a defensive stance and Andrea did the same, but when the fiends were almost upon them the ground exploded upward as granite spikes rose from out of nowhere and impaled two thirds of the fiends and sent the remainder flying into the air.

The next thing Harry knew the air was filled with gunshots and the fiends in the air were hit with a barrage of bullets. The assault continued until they hit the ground. None of the monsters moved, meaning that the bullets had most likely killed them already. Harry looked over for the source of the bullets and saw a smirking Sheyna holding her pistol at the pile of fiend corpses.

"I see you're putting that charm on your gun to good use." said Harry impressed

“What else did you think I would do with unlimited bullets?” asked Sheyna “What brings you out here anyway?”

“I’m ready to leave.” said Harry “Andrea showed me the place, so now all I have to do is make a portkey for us.”

“He came running when he heard that loud noise a minute ago.” said Andrea

“Well, I thought something was wrong, but you had everything under control.” said Harry in his own defense. “What was that noise anyway?”

“I deep froze a sandworm and hit it with a Thundaga, somehow it triggered an explosion.” said Sheyna “Thankfully the guts were frozen and I could just dodge them, otherwise it would have sprayed everywhere.”

“No need for details.” said Harry a bit disgusted from his own experiences with the giant worms, he’d never forget the time he got swallowed and regurgitated by one of those things, the memory made him shudder involuntarily.

“Well, let’s get our stuff and leave then.” said Sheyna , heading back toward the hidden house.

After gathering all their belongings the group assembled in the kitchen where Harry grabbed a ladle in order to make the portkey. He thought up the memory he’d gotten from Andrea, making sure to recall as much detail as possible. He tapped the ladle and it began to glow blue momentarily signaling a successful portkey.

“Okay, put one hand on the ladle.” said Harry “This might feel weird, so be prepared.”

The two women put grabbed a part of the handle and looked at Harry expectantly

“Are you sure this will-...” Sheyna’s words were cut off as the portkey activated and all three of them disappeared from the hidden manor.

...

"...work?" finished Sheyna as they reappeared in an abandoned alleyway.

"That was...interesting." said Andrea

"I'm just glad I managed to stay standing this time." said Harry "The first time I did that I fell flat on my face."

"That must have been a sight to see." said Sheyna amused at the thought.

"My friends seemed to think so, I still don't think it was that funny." said Harry "Anyway, where do we go now?"

"I suppose we should try and find a dealer." said Andrea "There's bound to be one around here somewhere, most likely in the shopping district."

They came out of the alleyway and Harry was awestruck at the sheer size of Limblum, Alexandria and Lucca had been big cities, but this place was gigantic. There seemed to be several different levels of streets and they were all overflowing with people and automobiles. There seemed to be certain streets for only vehicles and certain streets for only pedestrians, while other streets were built with sidewalks to accommodate both.

"I really hope you know where to go." said Harry to Andrea "We could be looking around for hours otherwise."

"Try days." said Andrea "luckily I know how to get to the shopping district from here, so it should only take about an hour from where we are now."

"Where are we now?" asked Sheyna

"We should be in the industrial district, that's why there aren't too many people on this level." answered Andrea

“Well then, lead the way.” said Harry

They walked down a flight of stairs onto another street and from there took a sky train to another part of the city. From that point they had to venture through three more streets and take another sky train to yet another section of the city. Finally Andrea announced that they were in the shopping district.

“People have to go this far to shop?” asked Sheyna incredulously

“Well, there are a lot of shopping districts, this one is for the big-spenders though.” explained Andrea “Then there are shops in other sections of the city as well.”

“Why do all the buildings look like they’re closed?” asked Harry

“That is weird.” said Andrea “This place is usually packed with people even if most of them can’t afford what they sell around here.”

“You folks looking for something in particular?” asked a gruff male voice from behind them, they turned to see a man who looked to be in his late thirties with long brown hair and stern looking face.

“Well actually we’re looking for a place to buy a small airship.” said Harry

The man raised an eyebrow at that before responding “This is the right place, but I think you came at the wrong time of year, everyone knows that the Festival of the Hunt starts in two days and most of the businesses moved the bulk of their expensive stuff to safe locations outside the city, those fiends don’t discriminate.”

“Festival of the Hunt?” asked Harry confused

“You don’t know what the Festival of the Hunt is?” asked the man incredulously

“We’re not from around here.” said Sheyna “But I’m sure we can figure it out, come on guys let’s go.” she quickly linked her arm with

Harry's and started to drag him back in the direction they came, Andrea quickly following behind them.

"What's the rush, Sheyna?" asked Harry

"Best not to draw more attention to ourselves." said Sheyna
"Everyone knows what the Festival is, well mostly everyone and you not knowing was already pretty weird considering if we were out of town we'd know what it was once we got into the city the normal way."

"So what is it then?" asked Harry "And what do fiends have to do with it?"

"Basically it's a gathering for the best fiend hunters in the world, they gather fiends from all over and as crazy as it sounds, they let them loose in the city."

"You're kidding." said Harry disbelievingly

"It's the truth." said Andrea "It's some time honored tradition. They only do it every few years though, it brings in a lot of money, but there's always a bunch of damage."

"I'll bet." said Harry "So it's a kind of competition then?" said Harry

"Yeah, the winner gets to name their prize beforehand and if it's accepted as doable by the committee, then you're in." said Sheyna

"Hmm." said Harry thoughtfully "I wonder if they're still taking contestants."

"What are you thinking?" asked Sheyna

"Why don't we enter." said Harry "If all three of us enter than there's a much better chance of winning, we don't have to fight each other do we?"

"It's not against the rules, but you don't have to." said Andrea "And I'm not entering anyway."

“Why not?” asked Sheyna “You can kill fiends as well as me and Harry.”

“I’m not entering.” said Andrea “Let’s just leave it at that.”

“Have it your way then.” said Sheyna “We should find out where we go to enter.”

“From what I know, you enter at the festival tomorrow and then that night they introduce all the prospective hunters and what their gunning for as far as prizes go.”

“Well then all we need to do is find a place to stay.” said Harry “Hopefully there are some vacancies.”

It took them another three hours to find a hotel with a vacancy, they finally managed to get a room at one of the more expensive ones, not that the price was too much for Harry’s massive account, he wondered what would happen if his account back home and the one here were to merger, he’d have enough money to finance a country if that happened. They were forced to rent out one of the hotel’s nicer suites. There were two bedrooms a large sitting room and a huge bathroom with a large hot tub in the middle, all in all it was a very nice room.

“I’m glad you had enough money to cover this place.” said Andrea “If I had used my money to get it, Garden would have tracked it in no time.”

“That’s why you don’t want to enter isn’t it?” said Harry “You don’t want Garden to recognize you, have you figured out what you’re going to do when you go back?”

“I’m not sure I will go back.” said Andrea “Before it always seemed like it was the best thing to do once this was all over, but now...”

“What would they do to you now that you’re a sorceress?” asked Sheyna

“I know what they’d usually do,” said Andrea “But lately Garden has been doing some very questionable things. I know the SeeDs are just following orders, but I’m more worried about who’s giving the orders. For all I know they could try to terminate me if they found out about my powers.”

“You should probably lay low as much as possible then.” said Harry

“That’s probably for the best,” said Andrea “There’s bound to be some SeeDs participating in the festival, there always are, Garden can’t pass up the opportunity to bring in more revenue.”

“That means I might actually have some competition.” said Harry

“Hey, I’m entering.” said Sheyna “I’m not enough competition for you?”

“No offence Sheyna, but I can kill a bunch of fiends at one time if I need to. You just have your gun and some materia.” said Harry

“Is that so?” asked Sheyna calmly, a bit too calmly “Well then, Harry, we’ll see how well I do with ‘my gun and materia’.”

“Sheyna, if you win, I’ll do whatever you say for a whole week.” said Harry

“Oh?” said Sheyna thoughtfully “And what if, by some miracle, you win?”

Harry grinned before answering “I reserve the right to call in three favors, they can be anything I want and you have to do it no matter what.”

“Deal, be ready to loose.” said Sheyna

“As long as you don’t cry too bad when I win.” said Harry

“Aren’t we supposed to be trying to get an airship?” asked Andrea

“Sure, but no reason we can’t make things a little more interesting since we can’t ask for what we want.” said Sheyna

“And what would you ask for if we didn’t need an airship?” asked Harry

“A Death Penalty MG” said Sheyna immediately “Those are one of the rarest guns around, very powerful and they have almost no recoil, you can even modify them to fire magic if you want.”

“Figures” said Harry “I don’t know what I’d ask for, maybe all the information they have about the merger, I don’t really need or want anything else.”

“Why ask for information on the merger?” asked Andrea “I’m sure they have it, but what good would it do you?”

“It’s the only thing I have to go on in order to get home.” said Harry “I know things are bad there and they are probably getting worse by the minute, I just want to get back there and do what I can to stop it.”

“Well after we find the others we can figure out what you need to do to get home.” said Sheyna “In the meantime though, let’s enjoy the time we have before the festival.”

“What do you have in mind?” asked Harry

“There are a bunch of places to have a good time in this city and it’s just now starting to get dark. We should just go out and try and relax a bit.”

“I don’t know.” said Harry hesitantly

“You two go ahead, I don’t feel much like going out.” said Andrea

“It’s settled then.” said Sheyna “Come on, Harry.”

She grabbed him by the arm and dragged him out of the room despite his protests. After making it down to the lobby Harry resigned himself to whatever plans she was making for them and simply

allowed himself to be dragged down the street with little argument. Sheyna stopped outside a large building with a sign reading Tantalus. It was obviously a night club and there were people crowded outside the door in front of a large burley man who seemed to only let certain people in. Sheyna shoved her way to the front of the line despite the angry shouts from her actions.

"Excuse me?" she said to the bouncer

"What?" asked the man before seeing her and brightening slightly
"Oh, you want in babe?"

"If it's not too much trouble." said Sheyna flirtatiously "I'm sure a big strong guy like you gets a lot of unsavory people trying to haggle their way in."

The bouncer's face split into a toothy grin before he replied "You don't know the half, okay you can go in."

Sheyna moved towards the door leaving Harry standing in front of the bouncer. Harry moved to follow her but the bouncer blocked his path.
"Hold it buddy."

"What?" said Harry "I'm with her." he pointed to Sheyna who had stopped when she realized he wasn't with her anymore.

"Club's reached its limit, no one else gets in." said the bouncer

"Look mate, I've had a really long week and I don't need this right now, be a good chap and let me in." said Harry

"I said no one goes in." said the bouncer and cracked his knuckles threateningly

By this point, Harry was fed up with being nice. He placed a subtle charm on the man to make him agreeable to almost anything Harry said, then he tried getting in again.

"Look mate, sorry about before." Harry began "But I really need to get in, how bout it."

“Sure” said the man cheerfully.

“And the VIP pass.” said Harry for good measure

“Right here sir.” said the bouncer before handing Harry a small clip pin to put on his shirt, it wasn’t obtrusive and actually looked kind of stylish being made of silver and studded with small bits of gems here and there. A small golden ‘VIP’ hung from a short bit of chain at the bottom of the pin.

“Thanks mate” said Harry before walking up to meet Sheyna who had a slightly surprised yet amused look on her face.

“You knew that would happen, didn’t you?” asked Harry as they walked inside.

“I had a feeling he’d stop you.” she said “I wanted to see what you’d do, I was going to step in if you didn’t find a way in on your own.”

“How thoughtful of you.” said Harry sarcastically “You’re still mad about what I said about the festival, I stand by it though.”

“Okay, now you’ve just sealed your own fate. I’ll enjoy having you cater to my every whim.”

The music in the club was very loud and had a fast tempo. The dance floor was filled with people doing all sorts of dances, some more erotic than others. A band was on stage playing and the music sounded like something akin to hard rock. Sheyna led Harry over to the bar and they both took stools before the bartender asked them what they wanted.

“Two Turtle’s Tears” said Sheyna

“Coming right up.” said the bartender before pulling down several bottles and two glasses. He quickly poured something from five bottles in each of the glasses before sliding them down the counter toward their intended drinkers. Sheyna took out some Gil and paid for the drinks before taking a long swallow from her glass. Harry just

looked at his drink skeptically. He had only had alcohol once and that was fire whisky. He hadn't cared for that too much, but maybe this would be different. He took a deep breath and took a long gulp from his glass. The taste was sweet with the distinct aftertaste of something that had a lot of alcohol in it.

"This is pretty good." commented Harry before finishing off his glass

"You may want to slow down, Harry." said Sheyna "It may not seem like it but there is a lot of alcohol in that drink."

"I'll be fine." said Harry "Hey bartender give me...what else have you got?"

"Try this." said the bartender "It's called Dragon's Glory. Only a VIP member can get this."

He poured a dark green liquid into a glass and slid towards Harry, Harry went to pay him but the bartender stopped him. "If you can drink that it's on the house." Harry raised an eyebrow at that and looked at Sheyna giving her a questioning look.

"By all means try it." said Sheyna

"I get the feeling I'm going to regret this later, but to hell with it." he downed the glass in one long swig and immediately began to cough. His throat felt like it was on fire and the world wouldn't stop spinning.

"Wow, you actually drank it." said the bartender surprised "I only know two other guys that have ever finished a whole glass of that and you're the only one to drink it so fast."

"Are you alright, Harry?" asked Sheyna

"What was...in that." asked Harry slowly and with a slight slur in his voice

"Mix of over twenty different high quality liquors about 175 proof." said the bartender

"No wonder." said Harry he then looked at Sheyna as if seeing her for the first time "Wow, you look really sexy tonight Sheyna."

"Thanks Harry, but I really wish you hadn't drank that so fast." muttered Sheyna to herself "Come on Harry, hopefully you can still dance."

"Dance?" asked Harry "Don't think I'm too good at that, at least that's what Parvati told me in fourth year."

"You'll be fine." said Sheyna "Hopefully" she added quietly.

They went onto the dance floor and after stumbling a bit Harry started dancing in time with the music along with Sheyna, things were going fine until Harry bumped into a short man with spiky blond hair knocking him to the floor.

"Hey watch it buddy." snapped the man irritated

"Sorry mate." said Harry reaching down to help the man to his feet. The problem was that Harry's balance was already questionable after two very strong drinks and bending over only served to increase the lack of balance. Harry soon found himself on the floor right on top of the man.

"Get off!!" yelled the man before shoving Harry off.

"Harry what happened?" asked Sheyna helping him up.

"I don't know, I was just dancing and then this guy came out of nowhere." said Harry

"I've been here the whole time!" said the blond man "You should watch where you're going or next time someone might decide to teach you a lesson."

"Is that a threat?" asked Harry sobering slightly

"Take it however you want." said the man

“Look, I’m sorry I ran into you, it was an accident and so was me falling on you.” said Harry

“Whatever.” said the man before walking away

“Let’s get out of here, Sheyna.” said Harry “I’m not much for crowds anyway.”

“Okay, but after this song.” said Sheyna, a slow song had started and Harry knew she wanted to dance with him some more.

“Alright, after this song.” he placed his hands on her back pulled her close and they began to move in time with the music.

It was two hours later before they finally left the club. There had been a multitude of slow songs after the first and Harry had begun to enjoy himself again despite the confrontation. Between songs they both had gotten more drinks and now they were both swaying as they walked back to the hotel, using each other as support.

“That was fun.” said Sheyna “We should try to do this again sometime.”

“Yeah” said Harry “Wonder if I should cast a sobering charm on us?”

“Why bother?” asked Sheyna “We’re almost back at the hotel and we can just sleep it off.”

“We’re sleeping when we get back?” asked Harry

“What else are we going to do?” asked Sheyna

“I kind of wanted to try out that hot tub.” said Harry

“Then go ahead.” said Sheyna

“But it’ll be no fun alone.” whined Harry

“You just want to see me without my clothes again.” said Sheyna
“Pervert”

"You know you want to." said Harry

"What I want is my own business." said Sheyna

"So are we doing it or not?" asked Harry

"Doing what?" asked Sheyna

"What I just asked you." said Harry

"I can't remember what you just asked me." said Sheyna

"Shit, neither can I." said Harry "I think I should do the sobering charm."

By this time they'd reached their room door. Harry tried using the keycard but it was no use in his current state. So instead he simply cast the unlocking charm on the door and opened it easily. He was barely through the door before Sheyna jumped him and soon they were on the couch kissing passionately and groping each other in ways that could hardly be considered innocent.

...

It was later that night when Andrea was awakened by a constant thumping sound and the occasional moan. She wondered what was going on so she left her room and went into the sitting room. There were clothes everywhere, and she recognized them as belonging to Sheyna and Harry. It didn't take a genius to figure out what they were doing and if the open wine bottles on top of the mini-bar were any indication, they were probably drunk out of their minds.

"Wonder what they're going to do when they wake up tomorrow." she wondered aloud before going back into her room and trying to get back to sleep.

...

Harry awoke with a splitting headache. He tried to get up but something was holding him down, that's when he realized that someone's head was on his bare chest and their arms were wrapped around him tightly. The other thing he noticed was that they both were completely naked.

"What the bloody hell happened last night?" he wondered aloud.

"I remember a lot of drinking." said Sheyna before sitting up and looking at Harry "The last thing I remember is going back to the bar for a third time."

"I don't remember much after that either." said Harry "But I don't think it'll take too much imagining to figure out what we did when we got back here."

"Is there a problem?" asked Sheyna

"Well, not exactly, it's just...well" said Harry awkwardly

"What?" asked Sheyna

"That would have been...umm." Harry took a deep breath "That was the first time I did that and, I can't remember it."

"You're kidding?" said Sheyna "No wait, you're probably not."

"Never really had the time before." said Harry "Came close with Ginny but we never actually went all the way."

"Well I don't know about you, but I'm fine with doing this again anytime." said Sheyna before pulling him towards her and kissing him deeply.

They emerged from the room an hour and a half later and Harry still had a pounding headache. Recent activities made him forget about it, but now he really needed a hangover potion. He summoned his trunk and began to dig through it looking for a vial. He was sure there should be some in there, but finding it was proving difficult. Finally he

came across three vials of a thick orange substance that was labeled Hangover Relief.

“Thank you Fred and George for teaching me how to make these.” said Harry before downing one vial

...

It was getting close to second sunset when the three companions made their way to the center of the city in order to take part in the festivities preceding the hunt and for Harry and Sheyna to register for the contest. They found the registration booth and there was a very long line in front of it. Harry resigned himself to the fact that he'd be waiting a long time and decided to check out some of the other potential competitors. There were all sorts of people, many of which looked very rough around the edges to say the least. There were also an assortment of weapons visible, swords, guns, spears, daggers, maces and even a few whips. One competitor caught Harry's attention though, he was a bit on the short side and had very distinct spiky blond hair. It was the same man from the night before. He had a huge sword on his back that looked to be over half as long as he was tall and it was very wide as well.

“What kind of sword is that?” asked Harry pointing to the man who was far ahead of them in line.

“That's a Buster Sword.” said Andrea “Very bulky and slow for most people, unless you have a lot of strength. Those weapons aren't for just anyone.”

“Hey, isn't that that guy?” asked Sheyna

“Yeah, I think so.” said Harry “A real charmer that one.”

“You know him?” asked Andrea

“We had...words...last night.” said Harry

“Harry was drunk and ran into him and then he fell on him when he tried to help him up.” clarified Sheyna

“Why couldn’t we just leave it at ‘we had words’?” asked Harry

“Where’s the fun in that?” said Sheyna

“I know you two were drinking last night anyway.” said Andrea “The big empty wine bottle on the mini bar was a good indication.”

“Huh?” said Harry “I don’t remember drinking any wine from the mini bar.”

“There’s a lot you don’t remember from last night.” said Sheyna

They continued to talk good naturedly until they came up to the booth.

“Name?” asked the solicitor in a deadpan, you could tell he’d been doing this nearly all day.

“Harry” said Harry

“Harry...?” said the man waiting for a last name

“Just Harry” said the wizard

“Oh great, another one.” muttered the man under his breath “Intended prize if you win?”

“An airship.” said Harry

“Airship?” said the man “Well that’s a new one. Alright make your way over to the stage and they’ll explain everything you need to know.”

Harry did as he was told and after Sheyna had registered her and Andrea joined him by the stage. There were people everywhere, many checking out the many attractions and games that were set up around the city square. However, everyone near the stage was looking at one section intently. Harry followed their gazes and immediately knew why they were staring so intently. There were rows upon rows of cages, each of which had at least one fiend inside. There were all kinds, ranging from Bombs to large tortoise-like

creatures. They seemed to all be sedated somehow and Harry realized that it was for everyone's safety since he was sure that some of those fiends could break those cages if they were awake. A few minutes when by with Harry simply studying the many fiends, then someone came up on stage and began to speak into a microphone.

"Good evening, ladies and gentleman, and welcome to the 1031st Festival of the Hunt!"

A loud cheer rang out from the surrounding crowd and the announcer let the roar die down a bit before continuing

"We are here tonight to judge our prospective competitors, we will be doing an experience estimate and anyone not meeting the requirements will be banned for their own safety, after that we will move on to the declaration of awards. During this time all remaining contenders will state what they would like should they win the contest, if the prizes are deemed unreasonable the competitor will be asked to name a replacement, if no agreement can be found, the contender will be banned from the hunt. Once that's out of the way we'll finish off with an introduction of all the remaining contenders and then we'll conclude the night with a fireworks display."

"And now I present to you our hard working festival staff, these fine citizens will be using special devices to measure each contenders' level of experience, once all the levels are gathered an average will be taken, anyone below that average will be banned from the competition."

A group of men in bright blue uniforms with the Limblum crest on over the chest came out with some handheld devices that resembled barcode scanners. They went up to each contender and measured them. When one of them got to Harry he pointed the machine at him and it began to beep steadily. The man stood there for a few minutes aiming the machine at Harry, then he began to mutter to himself.

"75...76...77...how strong is this guy?"

Then he went over to Sheyna and did the same thing. It took a couple of minutes to measure her level as well and the man shook his head with an odd expression on his face.

“It seems that the data has been gathered and we will now display the experience chart compiled by our central computer.” said the announcer

A screen came down behind him and on it several numbers began to appear arranged in columns. The first column had a number representing each contender. The next column had a number representing the level of strength. The next column displayed the same number all the way down, which was the average of all the levels gathered. The last column said weather or not the numbered participant would be allowed to enter. It seemed that the average level was extremely high because many of the prospective contenders looked shocked and disappointed when they saw the large blue 60 in the average column

“In a few seconds those of you who do not meet the requirement of at least level 60 will be identified by our staff and you will asked to leave.” said the announcer

The group of men came back out and escorted several people out of the area of the competitors. There were several shouts of outrage but no one really tried to cause too much trouble. When the technicians left there were only eleven people left including Harry, Sheyna and the blond man.

“I knew we were strong, but sixty is a pretty high requirement.” whispered Sheyna

“I still don’t get what all this stuff means anyway.” said Harry “I heard the guy say I was around 75 but he kept on counting, that’s good right?”

“I’d say so.” said Sheyna “We’re probably the ones that pushed the bar so far up.”

“But we aren’t the only ones left.” said Harry “These other people must be pretty strong too.”

“Alright ladies and gentlemen, we’re now moving on with tonight’s proceedings. Allow me to introduce to you the chairman of the festival and the Duke of Limblum, Duke Gordan Kenza!” said the announcer enthusiastically.

A middle aged man with graying dirty blond hair came out onto the stage. He was tall and well built and he sported a mustache and beard that were graying as much as his hair. He wore an expensive looking business suit underneath a long immaculate cloak. He exuded an aura of respect with the way he carried himself and he seemed to be well liked by the people based on the loud ovation he received upon taking the stage.

“Good evening,” he said in a deep baritone voice “It is my honor to serve as your Duke and to once again oversee the Festival of the Hunt, now it’s time to see what our contenders will be fighting for. Contenders please take the stage.

The eleven remaining hunters walked onto the stage and stood side by side.

“This is it?” said the Duke in surprise “The level requirement must be pretty high, let’s see...60! My, this hunt will be interesting.”

He walked to the end of the line furthest from Harry and Sheyna, they were close to the edge of the stage with only one person after them. The first three requests were granted and the three contenders were approved to compete. The next two were declined, one woman wanted a billion gil for her prize and there seemed to be no negotiation acceptable for her. The next man wanted an Ultima materia and when that was declined he asked for a comet materia, that too was declined since both materia were so rare, so the man decided not to compete and left the area. Then was the blond man’s turn, he asked for free reign of the royal armory and after a long deliberation he was granted his pick of any two weapons inside the armory.

The next two competitors were approved and based on their requests they seemed to be SeeDs or people closely associated with Garden. One of them asked that Limblum reopen as a dock for traveling Gardens. The other asked that they be allowed to venture into the caverns under Limblum in order to find a GF that was supposed to be sealed there. Then Harry's turn came.

"What do you request as your Hunter's Reward?" asked the duke

"I would like a good airship that can travel long distances and is easy to pilot." said Harry

"Sounds doable." said the Duke "Alright you're approved."

He then moved on to Sheyna

"I'd like an Airship that has a good stock of onboard weapons and good fuel preservation as well as exceptional maneuverability."

"You want an airship too?" asked the Duke a bit suspiciously "Well if that's what you want then that's what you'll get, approved."

Then he moved onto the last man. He was very tall and his face was mostly covered by a black hooded cloak. His request was shocking to everyone.

"I request nothing." he said simply

"You...you what?" asked the duke shocked

"I merely wish to participate." said the man

"Well you meet the requirement, so I don't see why not, approved." said the Duke "Now I'd like you all to introduce yourselves to the crowd."

He handed the microphone to the mysterious man who asked for nothing.

"The Predator" he said simply and Harry thought he saw him glance at him out of the corner of his eye. Harry got the feeling that there was something not quite right with this man and he made a mental note to stay on guard around him during the competition.

Next was Sheyna and then Harry, he decided to simply state his first name before passing the mic to the next person.

"Roland Baker, Limblum Garden, Rank 30" said the man

"Gaven Trent, Trabia Garden, Rank 25" said the next man

"Cloud" was the name the blond man gave. Then came Nix, Chen and Dotmer.

"There you have it folks, out contenders!" said the announcer taking the stage again "And now for our grand finale, we'd like to remind all of you that the games and attractions will be open until 3:00, that's right we're giving you a whole five hours after the ceremony to enjoy yourselves, now look up and enjoy the show.

The fireworks began and the competitors left the stage and went their separate ways, Harry felt eyes on him and turned to see both Cloud and "The Predator" staring at him.

"I've got a bad feeling about this competition." he whispered to Sheyna as they went off to try and find Andrea

"What about?" she asked

"That Predator guy kept on giving me weird looks and Cloud seemed to be sizing me up too." said Harry

"Remember that you can fight the other competitors, you don't get any kind of bonuses for it but if you incapacitate them then there's one less person to worry about."

"That's reassuring, said Harry dryly "I really hope I don't end up fighting one of the, I get the feeling we'd probably cause a lot of damage."

“Don’t worry,” said Sheyna “They expect things to get wrecked that’s why the area’s are preset before hand, we won’t fight in the residential section or anything like that, and they’ve got a lot of staff to make sure none of the fiends get in there either.”

“Still, I’m going to try to avoid it if I can.” said Harry

“Avoid what?” said Andrea coming up behind them.

“Fighting any of the other contenders.” said Harry “I get the feeling at least one of them has it out for me.”

“Watch out for the SeeDs too.” said Andrea “They’d attack you to increase their chances of winning and if either of them figure out who you are there could be trouble.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” said Harry “But for now let’s try to enjoy this festival since we’re here.”

The two women nodded and followed Harry toward the many booths housing food, games and rides of all kinds.

...

Harry rode the air train alone the next day, they’d reported back to the city square and been assigned specific sections of the city to start in. He’d been assigned to one of the industrial sections while Sheyna had been assigned to one of the recreation sections. The train stopped and Harry made his way out into the city to wait for the signal to start. He didn’t have to wait long though because no sooner had the train pulled away, then a loud whistle sounded all over the place. This served two purposes, one was to signal the start of the contest to the hunters, the other was to knock the fiends out of their blissful state of unconsciousness and send them into a rampage.

Flying fiends were all over the place and land bound monsters were already doing severe damage to the many buildings in the area. Harry glanced down at the watch around his wrist that the Hunter’s committee had insisted he wear. It showed a small screen with all the

participants' names and a gage showing how many monster's they'd slain. Harry's was empty, but Sheyna's already filled a little and so were a few of the others, that meant that he'd better get started.

His first victim was an unsuspecting cheetah-like fiend. The thing looked almost identical to the great jungle cat, had it not been for the odd tentacles coming out of its face where the whiskers should be and the serrated blades at the end of its two tails. He'd approached it from behind and by the time it noticed his presence it was already too late. Harry's gunblade cut neatly through its back and clear on to the other side. The fiend collapsed to the ground with two separate thuds.

The death of one of their own seemed to rally the scattered fiends, because the next thing Harry knew he was surrounded by a mass of both flying and land fiends. Too bad for them that this actually gave Harry the advantage since they were so close together, he could use quite a few spells to get the job done, now all he needed to do was decide which one. The fiends rushed forward and Harry just cast the first spell that came to him, Blizzaga. The ice magic erupted from both his outstretched hands, freezing many of the fiends and slowing down others. Then the frozen fiends suddenly sprouted huge spikes of ice from their frozen prisons, impaling many of the surrounding fiends, then the ice prisons shattered along with their occupants, killing all the remaining fiends.

"Well that takes care of that." said Harry pleased with the results. He glanced down at his watch and saw that he was still not in the lead, in fact he was in fourth place behind Sheyna, Cloud and "The Predator".

"Alright, time to start taking this seriously." he said to himself before casting a strong haste spell and using his magic to boost his speed.

...

An hour after the contest's start Sheyna was now in second place, her watch showed that only one other person was ahead of her and that someone was Harry. He'd had a slow start but now his gage was climbing rapidly and she was hard pressed to keep up with him. One thing was for certain though, she was not loosing this contest to him. If only she had a better gun things would be easier, but she was stuck

with just the one pistol and her magic and while both were getting her through the contest so far, she was a bit worried about when the really tough fiends came out.

No sooner had the thought crossed her mind than another whistle blew signaling a new batch of fiends was being released. A large ogre came barreling around a corner its large club swinging wildly. Sheyna blasted it in the forehead, but her bullets didn't seem to do anything more than annoy it. They did however, get the thing's attention drawn solely on her. It took thee hulking footsteps towards her unknowingly doing exactly what she wanted it to do. She now had a better chance of hitting it somewhere vulnerable, so she took aim and let loose two shots that hit it right in both eyes. The thing let out a load roar of rage and pain as it grabbed at its now useless eyes.

Sheyna followed up with a Firaga spell to the monster's chest. Then she hit it with a Thundaga spell. The last spell seemed to be too much for it because it fell to the ground with a loud crashing sound, much like a tree falling, and laid there lifeless and unmoving. That kill gave her gage a significant increase but it still wasn't enough to get past Harry, and it seemed that she was now in third place behind "The Predator" and Harry.

"I need a better gun." she grumbled to herself "Or even my katana might have been better, I've really got to get a new one." with those thoughts in mind she continued on looking for another fiend to kill.

...

Harry had been at it for almost three hours now. There was still three more hours left in the contest, and he only held his lead by a short margin. Sheyna was right behind him, Cloud and the Predator looked about even with the two SeeDs coming in just behind them, the other hunters' bars were totally empty, signifying that they'd been 'terminated' from the contest either by the fiends or one of the other contestants, Harry hoped it was the former and not the latter since he really didn't want to fight and deplete his energy meaning he'd most likely not win the contest if someone managed to stall him long enough.

Harry saw a group of fiends running in one direction as if frightened by something, he then saw a blue and yellow blur tore after the fiends. When he rounded the corner he saw Cloud standing beside a fresh pile of fiends corpses. He turned to Harry and gave him a quizzical look.

“You know I didn’t think you’d be this much of a challenge.” he said thoughtfully “Let’s see how you do against a real opponent.”

‘Here we go.’ thought Harry somberly ‘This guy had no idea what he’s just stepped into.’

Harry took the offensive, starting off with an overhead slash then following them up with a rapid succession of horizontal strikes. Cloud proved to be quite the nimble opponent though, which was impressive since he was carrying such a heavy looking sword. Harry made a feint to the left, but Cloud didn’t fall for it, instead he took the opportunity to launch an attack of his own, immediately putting Harry on the defensive, they clashed blades for a moment before jumping backwards and launching two spells at the simultaneously.

“Comet!” yelled cloud thrusting his right hand into the air making a small green orb clearly visible in his wrist guard.

“Gravija!” yelled Harry using an extremely powerful gravity spell. The comet spell manifested at the same time as the Gravija spell. The result was that the comet was pulled toward the ground thirty times faster than normal. The comet was already traveling fast, so the added velocity caused a much greater explosion than intended and both Harry and Cloud were flung in opposite directions where they both slammed into a building wall and then clear through it. Both buildings couldn’t take the force of the impact and they collapsed down on top of the two hunters.

A few seconds later there were two separate explosions of rubble and Harry and Cloud were rushing at each other once again. Harry was almost in striking distance of Cloud when he did something that caught the spiky haired swordsman completely off guard. He apparated behind him and smacked him in the head with the flat of his blade. Cloud was a little disoriented by this but he still managed to

swing his sword in Harry's direction, but Harry had already apparated again just to the side of Cloud and sent his right foot out, tripping his opponent. Cloud managed to stop himself from falling and flipped back onto his feet with an astounding display of agility. Harry barely had time to register the failure of his attack before Cloud was pelting him with a barrage of Thundaga spells. Harry quickly cast a Reflect spell, sending the magic right back at Cloud, he then began to transfigure parts of the ground into huge spikes, restricted Cloud's movement and apparating around to make sure that Cloud couldn't get a fix on his position.

He apparated right behind Cloud intending to finish the fight, he had a stunner ready but he never got the chance to fire it because he heard the sound of a gun firing and felt a sharp pain in his left shoulder. He looked around for the source of the gunshot and found the man known as The Predator standing a little ways down the street with a long barreled pistol pointed in his direction. Cloud had heard the shot too and was also glaring at the newcomer.

"And now the real hunt begins." said Predator darkly before leveling his gun at Harry again and firing off another round of bullets. Harry apparated away trying to buy himself enough time to heal the wound. He suddenly felt a sharp pain in his stomach and he was also feeling extremely dizzy. Something wasn't right, and whatever it was he was sure that the bullet had something to do with it.

...

Sheyna looked down at the display on her wrist watch which was currently displaying point standings instead of gauges. Harry was still in first, but he was still at the same point value as he had been twenty minutes ago, that was a little weird but she was just glad he hadn't gained too much more of a lead over her. She had somehow found her way down to third place just under Cloud and above The Predator. After that were the two SeeDs who seemed to have an almost identical point value.

She spotted an avian fiend flying overhead and unloaded the equivalent of two clips into it with a rapid firing of bullets. She was still under the effects of a Haste spell and boosted speed had its

advantages. Her point value only went up 25 for the fiend but it was better than nothing.

“Looks like its time to take out some more competition.” said a male voice behind her, she turned around to see the two SeeDs looking at her with matching smirks, she knew that she’d probably have to fight one of the other contestants, but not in a two on one, and it looked like they were preparing for just that.

“Nice strategy,” she said sarcastically “you’re both too pathetic to take on fiends individually so you team up on the other hunters and split the point value you get from their kills.”

“She’s on to us Roland” said Gaven mockingly

“Doesn’t matter, she’s about to be taken out and that should put us both in the lead.” said Roland nonchalantly

“You two think you can take me?” asked Sheyna “I really don’t want to hurt you guys.”

This seemed to amuse them since they both laughed hard at the comment. The laughter only increased Sheyna’s ire and she took the initiative and began firing on them without mercy. They both quickly erected Protect spells and the bullets pinged against the barriers harmlessly.

One of them withdrew a long chain whip with a spiked end, the other had ketas strapped to each arm and by his stance he seemed to know how to use them. Roland rushed forward intent on keeping the fight a close one so that he could use his arm blades to maximum efficiency and Sheyna would be at a disadvantage having only the gun as her weapon. Sheyna knew this though and wasn’t going to give him the chance to get close to her. She blasted him with a Thundaga spell but it barely seemed to faze him, that’s when she realized that he probably had junctions to aid him against normal magic.

She quickly jumped backwards to avoid a lash from Gaven’s whip. The force of the blow cracked the pavement where it hit, making her

glad she avoided being hit by that. She countered with a Blizzaga spell before quickly moving again to keep away from Roland who was getting ever closer. She began to cast spells and shoot as fast as she could, taking full advantage of the Haste spell's effects. The constant barrage of spells and bullets caused both of them to back off since their shields could only take so much. She had scored a few hits on both of them, but thanks to their junctions, the damage was little more than superficial.

She needed a way to neutralize the junctions and the only way she knew to do that was to draw the magic out of them, but to do that she'd need a GF and that was something she didn't have.

The SeeDs had regrouped and were now closing in on her from two separate angles. She decided to go after Gaven first since his whip had more of a range than Roland's blades. She focused on one of the green orbs in her right wristband before thrusting her hand out toward the oncoming SeeD. The ground in front of her split in a deep chasm heading straight for the surprised mercenary. She felt that the Quake spell was sufficient distraction for Gaven, so she focused on Roland. He was now close enough to start a good offensive and he came at her with a flurry of swipes from his blades. She was hard pressed to stay ahead of the furious assault and she'd already taken some damage from the blades. It seemed though, that the more she got hit the slower she became and the more hits she was taking, that's when she realized that the blades must be endowed with Slow magic. GF were capable of that type of junctioning, and Materia could produce the effect to. There were also some weapons that just did it because of the way they were forged. Either way she should have been on the lookout for something like that because now she was in real trouble.

She felt a sharp pain shoot across her neck and she felt something cold and metallic wrap tightly around her throat and drag her to the ground. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Gaven with his hand clenched firmly around the other end of the whip. Roland looked down at her with his blades ready to finish her off.

"This was too easy." he said smirking

...

Limblum was usually a very secure place, anyone hoping to gain access to the more restricted areas was bound to get caught on a normal day, but on the day of the festival, things were different. Most of the staff was busy around the city, making sure the fiends didn't do too much damage and providing support for any hunters that found themselves in over their heads. This was the reason why Eiko was able to get inside the palace treasury and 'liberate' a few very special gems.

Before she'd been forced to flee Limblum, she'd been trying to expand her Eidelon abilities with some of the gemstones that were endowed with the power of summoning. In her pouch were five different gems. One was light yellow and seemed to have a fiery aura, another was so dark that it gave off a dark purple glow and was shaped oddly. The next was a bright red garnet. Then there was a large golden pumice stone and finally there was half off a white sphere. These items each had the power to summon a specific Eidelon and if used by a summoner, it would eventually grant that summoner the power to summon the Eidelons without using the stone.

With her mission done it was time to leave this horrid city and move on to finish exploring this new world. Things had changed a lot more than she'd ever imagined, but she was prepared for just about anything at this point. She cast a Float spell on herself and jumped off of the Palace's roof and onto the roof of a nearby building. She'd put the on duty guards asleep and they'd be out for some time. Now all she had to do was get out of the city without running into too many of the fiends, or more guards.

She'd been traveling for twenty minutes and things were going well so far, she'd only run into a few low level fiends and they were no problem for her. She felt a few strong magical auras around and a few of them seemed familiar. That was strange and if circumstances were different, she'd stop and check into it. But right now she needed to get out of the city as quickly as possible.

Just as she had strengthened her resolve, one of the familiar signatures began to grow rapidly weaker, then another one started

getting weaker as well. She paused thinking she should look into at least one of the signatures since it seemed that whoever she was sensing was in trouble. She felt the signal furthest from her suddenly rise to a whole new strength that was very impressive. The other two signatures in that area were unfamiliar to her, but they were above average and if they were working together it should be possible for them to overcome the stronger power, if they were really good anyway. The other familiar powers were close together and it was closer to her as well. The weaker signal in that area was having sudden power spikes, but after every spike the power was weaker overall.

She started heading in that direction and as she drew closer, she could hear the sounds of fighting. There were gunshots and a clanging of steel on steel. She also could make out the distinct flashes of magic as well. When she finally got within sight of the battle, she was also able to match up the power signatures with the three people in the area. The weakening one was coming from Harry, she could see him battling against a man she'd only met once when he came to the Tree searching for something, she'd sent her Eidelons after him of course, but he managed to surprise her and get away before they actually fought. The other person was a different story. He was simply watching the other two fight not really caring who won it seemed. She'd met him in the same way as the other man. He'd come to the bottom of the tree looking for materia. He'd come to the right place to find it, but she wasn't letting him get away. He managed to defeat all her Eidelons until she revived them using phoenix, by that point he was too tired to fight and made a hasty retreat. Those were two of the three people that had ever escaped the tree before she lost to Harry and the others.

Harry was battling the Predator with all he had. She could tell he was poisoned and his magic seemed to be blocked also, but he was still able to use it to boost his strength and speed and he was doing his best to keep the fight close so that his opponent couldn't use his gun efficiently. That didn't mean he was defenseless though. On his left arm was a golden gauntlet that had vicious looking claws on each finger. He also still had his gun and every time Harry would block a swipe from his claw, he'd either smack him with the gun or jump back and fire a round of bullets at Harry. The wizard was able to avoid

most of the shots, but a few of the bullets grazed his arms and the side of his neck. She could see the three cuts from her vantage point and they were all bleeding heavily. Whatever the poison contained was making his blood flow much faster.

She had seen enough and decided to help Harry out. She wasn't sure of the reasons for the fight, but she doubted he instigated it. She cast an Esuna spell on him first and the bleeding slowed immediately, she then quickly cast a Full-Cure spell on him, healing his wounds and abolishing the fatigue. She figured that he could handle things from here and she continued toward the city limits unaware that a pair of green eyes had caught her retreating form before she was out of sight.

...

The first thing Harry did, after being refreshed by the Full-Cure spell, was cast a Resist spell on himself to make sure that if he were hit again, he wouldn't have his magic bound and the poison should be voided out as well. Once the battle was over he'd review his junctions to see why the poison affected him in the first place, but now he had to end this fight before the Predator could find a way to gain the upper hand again.

Harry began casting spells at the other hunter as fast as he could. He only used weak spells like Fire or Blizzard in order to cast them in quick succession. He steadily put more and more power behind each spell until his spells were so strong that they were the equivalent of their more powerful forms. Harry could feel his magic beginning to drain, so he decided to use a spell that would fix that problem, all he needed was an opening and when one of his Fire spells broke the Predator's defenses he had it. A light blue sphere sped out from Harry's hand and impacted the Predator in the chest. Then as quickly as it struck it rebounded, only it was much bigger than it had been when Harry had cast it. Harry let the ball strike him and he felt his magical power begin to return.

"Osmose." said the Predator with disdain "I hate that spell. I much prefer this one." He cast a spell similar to the one Harry had used, except that the ball was green instead of blue. Harry jumped out of

the spell's path, but it hit a fiend that had been a few meters behind him. The beast screamed as its life force seemed to be sapped by the ball. Then the sphere returned to its caster, rejuvenating him with the stolen energy.

The Predator didn't give Harry a chance to mount another offensive. He began unloading clip after clip at Harry and the wizard was barely staying ahead of him even with the added agility of a Haste spell. Harry waited until the Predator had to reload and apparated right behind him he slashed him across the back with his gunblade, pulling the trigger just before the blade impacted with his foe's back. The blade met a lot of resistance and barely managed to cut through the sturdy armor the Predator was wearing under his cloak.

Harry had to jump backwards to avoid a claw swipe and he then apparated again away from the barrage of speeding bullets. That gun was becoming a real problem and it was one Harry was about to remedy. "Accio Gun" he shouted as he reached out toward the gun. The firearm was ripped from the Predator's hand and Harry caught it easily as it sailed toward him.

"You think that the gun is the only weapon I have?" asked the Predator mockingly "I was hoping not to have to do this, but I need to do what I need to do."

"Why are you after me?" asked Harry

"I have seen what the demon has planned for you, I can't stop the demon, but I can kill you and it won't be able to carry out its plans." said the Predator. "Now see my true power."

He put both his arms in front of him and clasped his hands together. A ball of dark energy formed between his hands and it grew so large that it encompassed his whole body.

"Get the hell out of there!" yelled Cloud, speaking for the first time since the Predator arrived. "You do not want to fight him when he gets like this."

"Don't worry you'll get your shot when I'm done." said Harry

"This isn't a game kid." said Cloud "Get out of here now before he finishes transforming or you'll wish you had."

"So that's what he's doing." said Harry "I'm through playing around with you two anyway. Whatever he's turning into can't be that bad."

"You have no idea." said Cloud

A loud roar, reminiscent of a dragon, came from the mass of swirling dark energy. The energy began to subside and where there was once a man there was now a large purple demon with horns on top of its head and a long red main going down its back. It was around seven feet tall and was extremely muscular with a grotesque face. The thing turned on Harry and leapt at him with astounding speed. Harry dodged it and blasted the thing with a Firaga spell, but it absorbed the spell and sent out a massive fireball of its own. Harry apparated out of harm's way and blasted the beast with a Blizzaga spell. He then sent a barrage of cutting curses at it followed by a series of bone breaking hexes. The creature just shrugged off the curses and kept on charging at Harry. The wizard was starting get frustrated and decided to bring out the big guns. "Flare!" he shouted as he thrust both hands toward the demon.

The beast was hit with two consecutive Flare spells and took some heavy damage because of it. When the spells dispersed the beast's hide had several burns and it looked visibly tired. This didn't mean it was done fighting though. It came at Harry with the same speed it displayed after it appeared and caught the wizard off guard. It grabbed him by his neck and drove him into the ground as hard as it could. The slam hurt, but thanks to his junctions and the resistance he'd built up, the slam only bruised him. He suffered through a few more slams before blasting the beast away from him with an Aero spell. He then began to pool his magic together to unleash a more powerful spell.

"Ultima!" He shouted as he released the magic and cast the spell. Green, yellow and blue energy swirled and exploded all around the demon with tremendous force. By the time the spell ended and Harry looked around, the human form of The Predator was lying in a pile of

rubble. The whole section of buildings were also completely destroyed by the spell. To Harry's amazement and shock, the Predator began to pull himself slowly to his feet and stared at Harry with angry crimson eyes.

"I underestimated you, but it won't happen next time, no one will be around to save you either." said the Predator before seeming to fade into the shadows and vanishing.

"Well that was fun." said Harry sarcastically

"You forgot about me." said Cloud before he was hit with the flat of the swordsman's blade. Cloud followed up with a sweep of his right leg, sending Harry to the ground, he then held his sword with the point mere centimeters from Harry's neck. "You're lucky I have something more important to do right now." He then sheathed his sword and began walking away without giving Harry a second look.

The wizard pulled himself to his feet and looked at the standings for the contest. There was only twenty minutes left in the four hour time limit and Harry now had a commanding lead thanks to the points he'd gotten for defeating the Predator. With so little time remaining, Harry decided to simply head back towards the town square where the winner would be announced, if he found some fiends along the way then he'd kill them, but if not he had so much of a lead that there was almost no way for anyone to catch up now.

...

Sheyna knew that this was the worse possible position she could be in, If she didn't yield they'd probably knock her out or worse, kill her and say it was an accident. It wouldn't be the first time someone died during the Festival of the Hunt and the two SeeDs would most likely get away with it if they did too. But she'd fought long and hard to get to this point and these two using such an underhanded strategy really irritated her, which was unfortunate for the two SeeDs. Sheyna released a wave of raw power that caught the two SeeDs off guard.

Gaven was forced to release his whip and Roland was blasted backwards off his feet. Sheyna stood up and grabbed the whip from

around her neck before cracking it on the ground once getting a feel for the unfamiliar weapon. She lashed out at Roland, who was trying to regain his footing. The whip landed on his back with a resounding thwack and he hissed in pain from the powerful blow.

“Now its my turn.” said Sheyna coldly before casting a powerful Quake spell and keeping both SeeDs on the ground. Then the earth exploded upward under both of them sending them into the air. Sheyna wasted no time in letting loose a stream of bullets at both the SeeDs. The bullets hit blue barriers, signifying that the two had cast Protect on themselves. The protection spell didn’t help them much when it came to impacting the ground, but it did prevent them from being hit with the bullets. The two of them pulled themselves shakily to their feet and prepared to finish the fight.

“You’re more trouble then we thought.” said Gaven “But we’ve got just the thing to win.”

“Tidal Wave!” yelled Roland

“Hellfire” yelled Gaven

Sheyna knew exactly what they were doing and she knew there was little chance of her defeating not one but two GF’s, not to mention that she was already tired and worn from all the fighting she’d been doing. She had to stop them from summoning and she needed to do it quickly.

“Silence!” she shouted as she cast the magic binding spell on both of them. To her shock and horror the spells connected but didn’t do anything. Green light began to flare up around both of them and she knew that it was already too late. The two SeeDs disappeared and in their place were the towering forms of Ifrit and Leviathan. Sheyna took a few steps back and thought quickly about a strategy. Both GF’s had elemental weaknesses, Ifrit was susceptible to ice and Leviathan to lightning, but even with that it would take a lot of firepower to bring them both down.

Ifrit began gathering a large ball of fire around himself while Leviathan let out an unearthly shriek and a tremendous wall of water rose up

behind it. Sheyna cast the strongest Shell spell she could muster in order to absorb some of the impact from the two magical attacks and braced herself for the inevitable impact.

Ifrit's attack came first, the heat from the fire was almost unbearable, but thanks to the Shell spell, she only took superficial damage. That was a bit surprising and she figured that Ifrit didn't like its summoner much of it did such a weak attack. She didn't even get time to brace herself before the gigantic tidal wave crashed down on her, taking her down the street at a breakneck speed, causing her to smash into anything in the waves' path. A few smaller buildings, street signs and lampposts were just a few of the things destroyed by the wave and when the water subsided, Sheyna was soaking wet and sported several new cuts and bruises as well as broken ribs, but she still managed to regain her footing and she was more angry than hurt.

She began to bombard Ifrit with Blizzaga spell after Blizzaga spell. The fiery guardian quickly dissipated to avoid further injury. Leviathan didn't fare much better. Sheyna threw everything she had at the watery serpent, but unlike Ifrit, Leviathan wasn't going to give up without a fight. It blasted back with balls of freezing cold water. Sheyna avoided most of these but a few of them impacted her and it felt like the equivalent of being punched extremely hard only it covered a wider area.

Seeing that traditional spells weren't working, Sheyna decided to use a Lunarian spell. She didn't have a lot of magical energy left and the spell wouldn't be as powerful as the last time she cast it, but she hoped it would be enough.

"Moon Prism" she shouted as her hands moved in an intricate pattern. A multicolored ball appeared in front of her and a transparent rectangular pyramid appeared around it. Then the spell sped towards Leviathan and grew larger as it got closer. Soon the spell was as large as the serpent and it seemed to be sucking it in. That was shocking to Sheyna since the last time the spell exploded on impact. The spell pulled the GF inside and then it began to shrink. Soon the only thing left was a floating blue disc with the symbol of water on both sides. The disc flew towards Sheyna and she caught it in mid air.

She immediately felt a surge of magic followed by something entering her mind.

She was alarmed at first and tried to push it out, but then a hissing voice spoke to her.

“Be calm child, I am not here to hurt you.” said the voice, but this hardly eased Sheyna’s fear. “You have drawn me from one of my junctioners and now you are on of them, I will grant you my power, but if you do not wish to accept it than release me from your mind and I will not trouble you again.”

“Leviathan?” said Sheyna in surprise “But how...” she didn’t get to finish her thought because the two SeeDs reappeared and they didn’t look happy.

“You stole my GF, give it back!” yelled Roland “That junction stone is property of Garden.”

“Not anymore.” said Sheyna “And I’d like to see you try and get it back.”

Roland rushed at her, but it was surprisingly slower than before. She guessed that without his junctions he wasn’t all that tough. Forgoing any weapon she simply sidestepped the strike and countered with a hard punch to his face. The blow was a lot stronger than what she was usually capable of and Roland fell backwards to the ground, unconscious.

“You’ll pay for that!” yelled Gaven before launching a barrage of Fira spells at her. She tried to dodge the spells but the pain in her ribs was making it difficult to move quickly. The shell spell had dissipated and she took the full brunt of the magic. She clutched her chest in pain where the spells had burned her skin right through her clothes. All Gaven had to use against her was magic, and if she took that way then he would be all but defenseless.

She wasn’t sure exactly how to go about drawing someone else’s GF by using another, but she’d seen Harry and the others draw magic enough times to have a basic idea. Leviathan seemed to know what

she wanted to do because she felt his presence shift in her mind and as one they both reached out towards the SeeDs mind and attempted to pry Ifrit away from him. It was surprisingly easy to do and in less than a minute, Sheyna found herself holding a reddish-orange stone disc with a flame marking on either side. Gaven was clutching his head in pain and seemed to be unaware of the world around him. Sheyna hit him with a simple Thunder spell and he slumped to the ground unconscious.

She sighed in relief and looked down at her watch. It showed that she was about even with Harry and that they were the only two left in the contest. She smiled knowing that no matter who was declared the winner, they were going to get what they'd asked for and be on their way to finding the rest of their group soon. Even though that was acceptable, she still wanted to win, if for no other reason than to prove to Harry that she could, having him at her beck and call was just a bonus.

...

Andrea had been watching the festival from the city square with the majority of the other townspeople. There were monitors setup to display each of the areas of the city, and she'd seen the battles that her two friends had been fighting. She'd been worried when Harry had gotten shot from behind, but he'd somehow gotten over the poison spell. She didn't know how he did it because she'd been watching Sheyna fight the two SeeDs during the same time Harry was fighting the Predator and she'd missed a few details from both their fights. But now the contest was over and she was interested to see what the results would be. The points were being retailed and based on the gauges for each contender, they looked even.

A few minutes later a bedraggled looking Harry made his way into the central square. The exhausted wizard walked up to the competition overseer and began talking to him. Andrea made her way over just in time to hear the last part of the conversation.

"...what do you mean too close to determine?" asked Harry irritably

“The other contender’s score is exactly the same as yours.” said the chairman “It’ll fall upon the duke to determine the winner, so I’m afraid you’ll have to wait for him to decide.”

“This is just bloody brilliant.” said Harry “So how long do I have to wait?”

“The contest is now over, so it should only be a few minutes, please be patient, sir.” said the chairman.

“I don’t see why it matters anyway, Harry.” said Andrea “Sheyna’s the only one left and as long as we get an airship its fine.”

“I guess.” said Harry “I’m never going to hear the end of this if she wins though.”

“Sounds like a personal problem to me.” said Andrea

“Some friend you are.” Harry said with mock hurt

Andrea just smirked at him before glancing at the board. “Well, you’re still tied, and they’ve even got point values now.”

Sure enough the board displayed the point values underneath the gauges. Both were standing at 4349 points each. It was about that time when Sheyna made it to the square, she looked like she’d been through hell and back. Harry immediately rushed up to her and caught the exhausted gunslinger before she collapsed to the ground.

“Merlin, what happened to you?” he asked

“Double teamed.” she answered breathlessly “Wasn’t that bad, ‘til they summoned their GF’s. Who won?”

“A tie.” said Harry “Don’t worry about it though, me and you are the only ones who made it to the end of the competition.”

“Damn” said Sheyna “If those SeeDs hadn’t bothered me, I might have won.”

“Well if I hadn’t been interrupted I would have had more points too.” said Harry

“The important thing is that we have an airship” said Andrea “Besides, if I had entered you both would have lost.”

“Well you didn’t enter, so there.” said Sheyna

Just then the duke entered the square looking a bit miffed but trying to remain cheerful for the public eye.

“Good people of Limblum.” He said as he walked into the stage at the center of the square. “This has been a Hunt for the record books. We’ve rarely had contenders score this high, let alone a tie. But as it stands, two people can’t win. Therefore, it comes to me to decide a winner. I watched the contest thoroughly and both competitors had little difficulty with the fiends, but I would have to go by which one is the least injured, and that would be...” he gave Harry and Sheyna a once over since they’d been led to the stage by a few officials. Sheyna attempted to hide the fact that she was having trouble standing as well as the fact that her ribs were broken, but in the end it was in vain. “...Harry...what was your last name son?”

“Didn’t give one.” said Harry

“Well ‘Harry’ you have requested a top of the line airship as your prize, we’ll give you your pick from our hanger, but I’m afraid it will take a few days to work out all the red tape, as well as some other incidents that took place during the Hunt.”

“Incidents?” asked Harry “I thought it was legal to fight the other hunters.”

“No, that was legal, something happened at the palace during the competition.” whispered the duke “I’d rather not discuss it in public, son.” with that said he addressed the masses again. “And this will conclude the festival, the winner will receive his prize in a few days, and in the meantime the city will begin the cleanup process. Please stay away from the designated hunt areas for the next week or so, while we remedy the lingering fiend infestation. The areas are under

control though and no fiends will be going into the other areas of the city. As always continue with your lives as normally as you can until the after effects of the festival are taken care of.”

There was a loud cheer and the duke quickly left the stage to return to the palace. Harry was still curious as to what had happened, but he decided he'd get his answers later.

...

The three friends were lounging in the sitting room of their suite, two trying to recover from the days events while the third was watching the large holographic television screen that appeared out of the wall. Harry wasn't paying much attention at first, He was going over his junctions again to make sure he was immune to any kind of weakening spell. That was until the newscast began to talk about the Limblum palace.

“...And after an eventful Festival of the Hunt, the royal palace of Limblum must recover from not one, but two robberies. During the Festival, someone used the lull in security to sneak into the treasury and take a few priceless gems. No one knows why the assailant took the gems, but it is assumed that they are to be sold on the Black Market. A good portion of gil was also stolen, but exact monetary values are unknown. In a related story, there was another break-in shortly after the first, towards the end of the festival. The assailant is described as a slightly tan male about 55 with spiky blond hair. He was apparently one of the contestants, and he decided to take his intended prize when it appeared that he wouldn't win. The Ragnorok blade, donated to the city long ago, was taken along with some choice materia. The suspects whereabouts are unknown, but it is advised to be on the lookout for this extremely dangerous man.

“This just in, a global distress call was picked up by our station a few moments ago. The strange thing is its origin appears to be from Eshar. Here's the recording for our viewers.”

“This is the Eshar Liberation Coalition, this is an emergency distress call for anyone willing to help, Eshar has been in an iron grip of the Odine Virus since a few centuries after the merger. The human

population is at an all time low and cyborgs are running a much around the country. It's only a matter of time before they decide to spread their influence, so we're begging for any and all aid."

"They're breaking through!" yelled a voice that all three recognized as Bastian "Get ready to summon guys!"

"Please, anyone, we're in deep shit here, and we really need-" The transmission ended and the news casters continued to ramble on about their opinions on the transmission. In the suite, Harry, Andrea and Sheyna were surprised yet relieved that at least one of their friends was still alive, albeit in deep trouble.

"Well at least we know where we're going now." said Harry "I just hope no one like Strife here's that."

...

Cirrus paced back and forth in his office. He'd just heard the distress signal from Eshar, and that wasn't good. He'd most likely need to push the release of Astral Authority up. The launch still had another month before it was ready, but in order for Cirrus' plans to work, he needed to be sure that Eshar was in the same state it had been for the last few centuries, he didn't need them getting involved with the rest of the world. Besides Star City they had the only other means of accessing outer space, and he wasn't about to let anyone get in the way of his master plan.

"Looks like I need to contact my little mole again." He smirked knowing that his spy wasn't willing in the slightest to help him, but they had no choice. He was sure that they were in Eshar now. The tracker he'd placed, told the location of his spy as being somewhere in the central planes of the Esharian continent. He'd already used them to compile a lot of information on the offworlder and now he'd use them to make sure Eshar stayed where it was supposed to, in the iron fist of the Odine Virus.

...

A/N: Now that was a long chapter. I went well beyond 10k on this one and now the story is over 300k words . I know the Cloud thing will confuse a lot of people, but as with Laguna I will explain why he's there as well as 'The Predator' although I'm sure any Final Fantasy 7 fans know who he is too. I know the plot is confusing and that people are wondering where I'm going with this, but trust me, I know what I'm doing, I don't think I'm going to write myself into a corner. I've got everything drafted out in my head and in the end, everything SHOULD make sense. If that's not good enough though, I'm open to talking to anyone who wants to in order to alleviate any confusion on the plot. Leave a review, PM, or IM me. I use AIM and my name is Doom18769. As for any grammar issues...I'm trying, if it bothers you that much, be my beta. I also apologize for the extremely late update, I had this chapter sitting on my hard drive for a while now, I just didn't post it because I was debating whether or not to change some things. And for the last week I just ignored internet altogether in favor of playing Final Fantasy XII.

The Arrival

It took several days for the airship to be ready. The Duke had informed them that the ship was being built from scratch in order to meet Harry's specifications. The time it took to build was surprisingly short, but Harry was thankful for that. The days following the festival were hardly idle ones though, the group had stocked up on supplies and outlined their plans for infiltrating Eshar.

"The border's been closed for years." said Andrea as they sat in their suite, waiting for the envoy from the Duke to escort them to the airship docks. "We can't just fly in and expect no one to notice."

"I was thinking the same thing." said Harry "There has to be a way though. Can't we land near the border and slip in on foot?"

"That might be a problem." said Sheyna "Look at this" She pulled out a map and spread it out on the table before them. "The last recorded position of the border was where that red line is."

"But that goes all the way around the whole continent!" said Harry incredulously "These people really are isolationists, that's a huge area."

"The only two places where it's accessible by land are through the Trabia Planes in the north and a small peninsula in the south."

"If we choose the southern route, we'll likely be spotted." said Harry "It looks like the main population center is in the southern part of the continent."

"This map is extremely outdated though." said Sheyna "There's no telling what we'll find when we get in there."

"A lot of machines apparently." said Andrea "This should be an interesting trip if nothing else."

"Long as well." said Harry "I think we'll go in from the north, land in Trabia and walk it the rest of the way."

“Lots of fiends in that area.” said Andrea “One of the worst places actually, since there’s no human population there the fiends are very strong and they could pose a problem.”

“We’ve fought plenty of strong fiends already.” said Harry “How strong could these be?”

“You remember those ruby dragons in the training simulator?” said Andrea “From reports of that region the weakest fiends were at least five times as powerful as those.”

“Sounds like fun then.” said Harry “We’ll really be able to cut loose then.”

There was a chime heard as the intercom in the room came to life, it was connected to the front desk and used any time the hotel needed to notify any of its guests about anything in particular. “This is the front desk, your escort to the airship docks is here, please come to the main lobby as soon as possible, thank you.”

“Looks like its time to go.” said Sheyna “We have everything we need?”

“Restocked on our Elixir and Potion supplies, grabbed a few Remedies too, we should be fine with all our magic and since you gave Ifrit to Andrea she can cast spells now without worrying about using her sorceress powers.”

“Let’s get going then.” said Sheyna before heading out of the door. Harry and Andrea soon followed and they soon found themselves in the lobby.

Their escort was a tall thin man in a blue and white Limblum military uniform. He introduced himself as Kale and led them to a nice looking luxury car. The ride to the airship docks took only twenty minutes and the group soon found themselves standing before Duke Kenza.

“Welcome to the Limblum Airdocks my friends. I’m sorry but I’ll have to make this short and to the point.” said the Duke quickly “Your airship was designed as per your specifications, really we were

already working on building a new fleet so your airship didn't take long since it was mostly completed anyway. Now, this isn't the normal large frigate airships, this one flies more like a large fighter jet than anything, it has a stealth mode and some light armaments and its maneuverability is top notch. I'll warn you that it can go quite fast so be careful, any questions?"

"So it doesn't have sleeping quarters then?" asked Harry

"Unfortunately no." said Kenza "It does have room to seat ten comfortably though and there is a stash of camping equipment in the ship should you take any long journeys, it was either aim for comfort or practicality and you seem like a man who values the latter."

"When can we leave?" asked Andrea

"As soon as you like." said the Duke "I'd just ask one favor."

"And that is...?" asked Harry

As you know there was some trouble in the palace the day of the Hunt. Now normally I wouldn't bother the winner with something like this, but I could use all the help I can get. There were two break-ins, one during the festival and one immediately following it. The first robbery was the treasury, the second the armory. The strange thing is that both incidences both perpetrators only stole select items. The one from the treasury took some gems that could be quite dangerous in the wrong hands, the other stole just one sword, although it is a very unique sword in that it was supposedly forged with the continued use of a controlled Ultima spell. As you can guess that makes for a very strong and magical blade, again, dangerous in the wrong hands."

"So you want us to keep a lookout for your stuff and bring it back to you?" asked Sheyna "And if we find it?"

"You'll be compensated of course." said the Duke

"We'll be sure to keep a lookout then." said Harry

“I’d appreciate it, best of luck to you in your travels, son don’t give the fiends too much trouble.” joked the duke before leaving and bidding the guards to show the three travelers the way to their airship.

The guards led them into a large hanger filled with airships of varying types and sizes. They stopped in front of a moderately sized aircraft. The wings seemed to be folded back so that they were parallel with the rest of the craft. The boarding ramp was already down and it extended from below the nose of the ship and went directly into the bridge. The ship itself was mostly silver in color with dark blue around the tips of the wings and nose. It had no tail to speak of instead the rear was outfitted with high powered thrusters in order to obtain a high velocity.

The walked up the boarding ramp and into the ships interior. The bridge had ten seats all in similar style, black with red around the outside and back. The two at the front were obviously for the pilot and copilot. The rest of the seats were arranged in two rows of four directly behind the pilot’s seat. There was only one large window in the craft that extended from the middle of the nose to the last row of seats. One of the guards explained that each seat had an ejection protocol that could be initiated by the pilot should the need arise.

The guards left after explaining the features of the ship including the weapons system and the stealth mode. Harry immediately hopped into the pilot’s seat, intent on flying his new airship.

“So you even know how to fly one of these?” asked Sheyna incredulously

“What’s the matter, don’t trust me?” asked Harry

“If you don’t know how to fly this, then no I don’t.” said Andrea

“I have no hands on experience with one of these.” confessed Harry
“But I’ve been reading about them and it doesn’t seem that hard. Their all basically the same in terms of operation and the actual flying just seems like controlling a huge broom to me. Just different control mechanisms.”

"If we die..." said Andrea

"I'll revive you." said Harry nonchalantly

"If there's anything left to revive." muttered Sheyna

"I'm going to have to voice my objections too." said Seth "You and I both know you have no idea what you're doing."

"Shut up Seth" said Harry to the guardian "Just watch, I take to things really quickly, we'll be fine."

"Somehow, I'm not convinced." said the Guardian

Harry went through all the preflight protocols he remembered reading in the many books about airships that he'd snagged from Grindlewald's library. He was almost certain he could fly the ship with little to no problems, so after checking the fuel and radioing the hanger that he was ready to leave he began to start the engine.

"You two might want to sit down." said Harry

Andrea took the copilot's seat and Sheyna sat directly behind Harry. Once the girls were buckled in Harry began to steer the airship towards the now open hanger doors. It wasn't difficult, just like driving really, a skill he'd made himself learn before leaving home at Hermione's insistence. He began speeding towards the doors and once he was out on the runway he began his ascent. It wasn't long before they were high above the city of Limblum and heading northwest towards their destination.

"You're not doing too bad." said Andrea "I was expecting a crash before we even took off."

"Oh ye of little faith." said Harry mockingly "You two should know by now that I'd never try to do this if I didn't feel absolutely sure I could manage it."

"If you need a break, let me take over, I know how to fly these things." said Andrea

"I'll be at it for a while, but thanks." said Harry "I just hope everything else goes this smoothly."

...

Cirrus lounged in his comfortable leather office chair. He was a bit disappointed in the way the last conversation with his mole went. They seemed to be developing a conscience all of a sudden, and that just wouldn't do.

"I'm not pleased with what I've been seeing." he'd said by way of greeting when his summons had been answered. The bracelet the spy wore had a direct link to the president's office. He'd been using it for quite some time now and through it he'd been able to pull all sorts of strings using his contact to manipulate the offworlder and his comrades, but lately that was getting harder and harder to do.

"I told you I needed to keep my actions to a minimum and with the whole sorceress thing I couldn't really do much." said the voice over the communicator.

"How long are you going to feed me that excuse?" he asked irritably "That's the same crap you used last time, I'm beginning to doubt your loyalty, and you know what happens if I find out you've betrayed me."

"I've given you no reason not to trust me." said the spy after a moment's pause.

"You've given me no reason not to doubt you either." countered Cirrus

"After all I've helped you do?!" said the spy growing angry "The raid on the ship that you made look like Baron, the Chaos Flame hideout, the ambush on Garden when they were fighting the Empire, what more do you want from me?"

"I want you to make sure Eshar stays the way it is." said Cirrus "Things are going to get interesting soon, I can't have Eshar's

superior technology available to everyone, things need to stay the way they are.”

Why should I?’ asked the spy “You’ve already broken your word to me three times already, you can’t keep doing that and expect me to continue following your orders.”

“Since when do you have a choice?” asked Cirrus coolly “We both know what will happen if you disobey me, you don’t hold just your life in your hands. I never promised anything.”

“You said you’d leave Chaos Flame and Garden alone, you said all I had to do was keep tabs on Harry, but you lied!” accused the spy.

“You presumed too much.” explained Cirrus “I said I would do my best to avoid needless bloodshed and involve Garden and Chaos Flame as little as possible, I did exactly that. SeeD was in the way, Chaos Flame was in the way, they were enemies and I dealt with them accordingly. You shouldn’t care about those things anyway, you work for me.”

“Fine, I’ll do what I can, but don’t blame me if another one of your ‘master plans’ goes down the drain.” said the spy, “I can’t be held accountable for the shortcomings of your own subordinates”

“Don’t tempt my patience, you know I won’t hesitate to eliminate loose cannons like you, even if you are family.” said Cirrus “Or did you forget that the bracelet won’t come off without my say so? At any given time I can activate it and kill you without a second thought”

Silence reigned over the connection, undaunted Cirrus continued

“I see you’re starting to see things my way” He said suddenly cheerful “I’m glad we have an understanding, I eagerly await your next report.”

“Understood Mr. President” said his spy in a monotone

“I don’t have to remind you about getting captured, I know you’ve been caught twice now, once by Alexandria and another time by Sorceress Mia, you must avoid these situations, if things look bad,

abandon your position and return here immediately, as troublesome as you are, I still have some uses for you that can't be accomplished if you end up dead."

"What touching concern father." said his spy sarcastically "If that's all I'm cutting this short, someone's coming."

With that the communication signal ended leaving a very irritated president behind.

"Troublesome daughter" he muttered before moving on to more important matters.

Bringing up the intercom on his desk, he called down to the R and D department looking for his head of new development.

"Prophesier Citanul, how long until we're ready to launch?" asked the president

"Awaiting yur kommand Mister President"

"Launch immediately." said Cirrus before cutting the link. He reached down into his whine cabinet and grabbed a bottle of top quality Marlboro Fruit whine. The stuff was hard to come by, but he had many good resources. The sweet purple liquid was smooth on the way down and was good for an relaxant after such an eventful day, in a matter of hours he'd have to power to single handedly rule the world with an iron first, It was a very good day to be Cirrus Strife.

...

The trek into Eshar was not an easy one. First they had to climb a series of steep cliffs and then trek across a plateau which seemed to be populated by nothing but large black reptiles called Hexadragons. The beasts had the ability to breathe fire, as most dragons did, and they also had an affinity for Flare spells. All three members of the group had suffered burns from fighting the dragons and even with cure spells the burns still irritated them once they had been healed.

After making it to the other end of the plateau, the group got its first look at Eshar proper. Directly below them was a dense forest and beyond that vast planes stretched in all directions with other mountains visible to the east and west.

“So this is Eshar” said Harry “Not much here is there?”

“We’re still several hundred miles from where the actual city should be.” said Andrea “This continent is huge, it could take us weeks to get there, if not months.”

“Hmm” was all Harry said

“What does that mean?” asked Sheyna

“Nothing” said Harry dismissingly

On the inside his mind was whirling. He had several things on his mind, the least of which was how to accomplish what they set out here to do. But another more morbid section of his thoughts were centered on both Voldemort and Kuja. The latter had, for a time since their battle, felt as if he were about to die, then a few days ago his power had surged above and beyond what Harry had ever felt from him before. And then it had vanished without a trace, now all he felt was his lingering connection to Tom Riddle’s true self back in his world. That was hardly a good thing though, all he knew was that Tom was relatively happy and that was never a good thing for him.

After resting for a few minutes they continued on down the cliff and into the dense forest below. The climate was moist, yet strangely cool within the forest. It was almost like a cavern. The canopy was so thick that sunlight was barely visible. Harry conjured a ball of light and floated it in front of him so they could have some light.

After traveling for some time the group decided to stop for the night and make camp. The process was quick and routine by this point and the job was done quickly. After Harry warded the area they all decided to relax around a small fire to rest. It didn’t take long for something to disturb the wards however and this immediately set Harry on guard.

“Something’s near by.” he said hastily “Doesn’t feel like fiends though, a bunch of humans.”

“I didn’t think we’d run into anything other than monsters up here.” said Sheyna “You going to go check it out?”

“Already ahead of you.” said Harry’s disembodied voice as he moved away from the camp already invisible

It didn’t take him long to find the source of the disturbance and what he saw greatly surprised him. There were a group of SeeDs about twenty of them all near the edge of the wards. They appeared to be confused about something, but what Harry couldn’t tell, the wards were only supposed to mask the area and make it look like any other part of the forest, hiding the small clearing they were camped out in and subtly detouring anything that came near it into going somewhere else, but these SeeDs appeared to be slightly immune to the latter effects.

“I got an odd feeling.” said one of them, what’s the deal?”

“There’s supposed to be a clearing here and the stream we’re looking for isn’t too far from that.” said another, Harry thought he’d seen him before the spiky red hair looking familiar

“Are you sure we’re not lost Dincht?” asked another one

“We’ve been in this forest for months now, I think I know where I’m going Pyle.”

“Stop arguing and let’s just keep going this direction.” said yet another soldier

“Oh great their just going to walk right through the wards, I can’t have that, but I don’t really want to fight all these guys either.” thought Harry “I need a distraction.”

He gathered a small amount of magic and formed it into a fire spell, he blasted one of the trees closest to the group of SeeDs and it was set ablaze immediately.

“What the hell?!” yelled one of the SeeDs as Harry began to move around quickly firing random spells without breaking his invisibility. He didn’t attack them directly merely aiming close enough to scare them while still doing no actual harm. Getting creative he aimed a few animation charms at the nearby trees causing them to swing down their branches and bash the group of SeeDs repeatedly. Remembering one of the creatures he’d fought in the forest he conjured an illusion of the biggest fiercest Marlboro his mind could come up with.

“We’re in now position to fight that thing!” yelled Dincht “Retreat back to base, our supplies aren’t worth dying over!”

Some of the SeeDs hesitated but after directing his illusion to roar and move forward the hesitators quickly ran for it, some firing spells over their shoulders in order to slow the ‘monster’ down. Thankfully none looked back to see whether or not their spells hit the target, because if they had they would have seen them go right through the illusory Marlboro.

“That was close.” muttered Harry

“Your strength was great enough to overcome even that many foes human, why did you resort to such cowardly tactics?” asked Zero

“Stupid lizard, he didn’t know how many more there were and he didn’t want to alert anymore fiends, plus these SeeDs may not even be his enemy, why should he waste his magic on them?” Snapped Seth irritably

“Don’t even start you two.” said Harry “Seth was right though, Zero, I didn’t want to fight a meaningless battle if I didn’t have to.”

“Hmmm” was all the dragon said in reply

...

Bastian was not happy, in fact he was down right miserable. The attack on the communications station had been successful yes, but the losses had been heavy and only he, Laguna and Sophia had made it back, the other Androids as well as Ethan had stayed to cover their escape despite Bastian's protests. Now he had no idea where his friend was and after three days there was no sign that their message had done any good. He wanted to do something, but he could think of nothing useful he could do at the moment, and he hated that feeling.

He felt a hand on his shoulder and instantly knew who it was. "Hey" was all he said in way of greeting her.

"I'd say everything will be alright, but I don't know if that's a lie or not." said Sophia somberly

"All we can do is hope," said Bastian

"Do you think he made it?" asked Sophia "Out of the lafa Tree?"

"Probably, knowing that guy." said Bastian "Hopefully Ethan can pull off some miracle and survive, stupid bastard, why the hell did he have to be so damn heroic!?"

"You'd have done the same thing." said Sophia "So would I, he just acted before either of us."

"Still, I should have been able to do something." said Bastian

"You did all you could" said Sophia "Don't blame yourself, it wasn't your fault."

"I know that, but it doesn't change anything, I'm just too weak." said Bastian bitterly "I couldn't save Chaos Flame, I couldn't stop Bessaid Garden from being blown up, and I couldn't even do anything when we fought that summoner. I'm useless."

A strange look crossed Sophia's face as Bastian spoke it almost looked like guilt, but it quickly passed and Bastian dismissed it too

absorbed in his own thoughts to really pay it much attention. "You're not weak, Bastian." she said softly "You may not be insanely strong like Harry or Antym but you're not weak either, you're one of the strongest people I know, if not in power in mind and heart, don't forget that."

"Thanks Sophia" he said sincerely

"Anytime" she responded cheerfully

"I don't mean just for that." he said seriously "I mean for everything, you stuck by me when no one else would, and you're still doing it now, I know that no matter what happens I can completely trust you."

"Then I hope I never do anything to betray that trust." said Sophia

"I know you won't." said Bastian pulling her into a hug, as a result he missed the few tears that leaked from her eyes, and he was totally unaware of the guilty thoughts that raged through her mind.

"If only you knew Bastian" she thought sadly "But I suppose you and everyone else will soon enough"

...

Ethan groggily opened his eyes, the last thing he remembered was using the last of his magic to take out a group of android guards and hoping that it had been enough to allow the others to make it out. Currently his entire body seemed to resonate with pain and everything felt extremely weird. He attempted to move but found that he was unable to make even the slightest of movements. All he could see was the bright white ceiling and nothing more.

"Ah, our newest specimen has finally awakened." said a voice from somewhere else in the room. "You and your friends have been causing quite a disturbance."

Ethan attempted to speak but found again he could not.

“You may be wondering who I am or where you are, but unfortunately for you...” said the voice in a genial tone “You aren’t in a position to ask any questions.”

“Sir specimen B-432 has been modified based on your specifications, we are waiting the go ahead to begin mind restructuring.”

“You hear that B-432?” asked the man to Ethan “Soon you’ll join our nice little family and anything you knew before won’t matter much anymore.

“He speaks the truth human” said Pandamona “You’re body had been...changed in ways I cannot pinpoint, it is very synthetic and much of your brain and vital organs have been replaced with mechanical counterparts.”

“WHAT?!” screamed Ethan mentally the shock of the statement being almost too much for his mind to comprehend.

“Sir, irregular brain activity detected, unable to pinpoint source.” said the subordinate to the man in charge.

“It doesn’t matter, begin reformatting now.” ordered leader

Ethan felt someone attach something to his head in several places, seconds later he felt something inside him begin to shift and then his world exploded in white hot pain. It only lasted for a few seconds and then the world went black once again.

...

“There are SeeDs here?” asked Andrea puzzled

“That’s what I said” said Harry “A squad of about twenty is what triggered the wards, based on what they said I’m assuming there are more of them.”

“I want to know what they’re doing here.” said Andrea

“Well then why don’t we go ask them?” said Sheyna sarcastically

“You might have a point.” said Harry

“Are you kidding me?” said Sheyna “What we just go up to there camp and say ‘hey remember us? We want to know what the hell you’re doing here.’ I’m sure that’ll go over real well.”

“We’re going.” said Andrea “I need to see what’s going on and this is probably the best time to figure it out. We might need help with what we’re trying to do anyway and if what you said was true, Harry, they may be able to shed some light on what’s going on here in Eshar too.”

“We should leave at dawn then.” said Harry “I put a tracking charm and the red headed guy so we shouldn’t have too much trouble finding them.”

...

Harry’s words proved true, it only took the group half an hour after leaving their camp to make it to the area where the SeeDs had set up their base. The base was basically two Gardens that appeared to be heavily damaged. The SeeDs had setup some cabins made from the surrounding forest trees and used what equipment was salvageable from the two Gardens to build the rest.

“What in Hyne?” asked Andrea to no one in particular “These are Galbadia and Fabul Gardens.”

“Or they used to be anyway.” said Harry “I thought the only Garden that got destroyed was Bessaid.”

“Stop!” yelled someone suddenly and the group found themselves instantly surrounded by SeeDs “Who are you and what is your business here?”

“Andrea Pryde, SeeD rank A, ID# 5791” said Andrea “Here to report to the commanding officer on my current mission status.”

“There is no way...” said one of the SeeDs in disbelief “Somebody go get the Commander!”

“I’m here” said a stern female voice from behind the crowd of SeeDs. They parted allowing the person to come to the front. She was a woman of about average height with brown hair tied in ponytail down her back. She looked to be in her late thirties or early forties based on the few grey strands visible in her hair as well as the slightly visible wrinkles in her face. She wasn’t an ugly woman, far from it, but she was clearly past her prime.

“Commander Duran.” said Andrea giving the woman a one fingered salute. The woman paused briefly taking in Andrea’s appearance before returning the gesture.

“You and I have much to talk about Pryde.” she then looked at Harry and then Sheyna “Very much to talk about. Follow me.”

Andrea began following immediately while Harry and Sheyna lingered a little

“That went for you and your friend as well, Mr. Potter,.” said the woman and Harry was reminded of his old Transfiguration professor.

She led the group past the onlookers and into the ruined Galbadia Garden. Once inside the garden it appeared that the damage was mostly external, the inside still appeared to be in decent condition. She led them to a small office and directed them to sit down. They did and she got right down to business.

“I was informed by Commander Raynor of the specifics of your mission. I understand that the last time you and Mr. Bates talked to him you were told not to contact him again?”

“That’s correct ma’am” said Andrea

“I’m not sure whether or not you are aware of this Pryde, but Garden is not in a stable state right now. I’m sure that’s obvious from our current position, but if you’d have come to any other Garden I don’t

think you'd have been quite so welcome, especially given your current company." at this she looked pointedly at Harry

"What have I got to do with anything?" asked Harry

"Quite a lot I'm afraid." said the commander "How much are you aware of the current situation within Garden?"

"I'm not really sure." said Andrea "I know that five Gardens were involved in a battle with Baron and Strife in Glacia about six months ago, Bessaid Garden was...was destroyed during the retreat."

"Yes that was unfortunate." said Duran "After that attack the remaining Gardens were told to report to the southern coast of Gaea in order to engage in battle with the Sorceress Anastasia. The order was given to us directly from Admiral Dincht. I and Commander Paris of Fabul knew that our troops weren't in any position to enter another large scale battle after retreating and suffering heavy losses from another. We made our concerns known, and that proved to be a mistake."

"The Admiral viewed this as an act of treason. He ordered the other Gardens to attack us. As I said we were in no position to enter a battle like that and fighting against other SeeDs was out of the question."

"He ordered what?!" yelled Andrea in shock

"That man has clearly lost his mind, but in spite of that the other Gardens followed his orders. We barely managed to escape. Our navigation systems were gone and our flight capabilities were extremely limited. This spot is where we crashed and we lost a lot of soldiers on impact, including Commander Paris."

"As I'm sure you know this is not friendly territory. We have to be on constant guard against fiends and recently we seem to have gained the attention of the Esharian government. Their cyborgs attack us every now and then, but we've managed to hold our own, albeit barely. That broadcast seems to have slowed them down, but I don't know how long it will last."

“That brings me to my next question, what are you doing here of all places?” finished the commander, her tone dictating that she expected an answer without delay.

“We came here to investigate the broadcast.” said Andrea “Harry seems to think that Eshar might possess some means to send him home and we are here to look into it, I am still following my mission guidelines as they were given to me.”

“And where is your assigned partner for this, Ethan Bates?” asked the commander

“We were separated and I do not know where he is at this time.” said Andrea

“I see” said Duran “So tell me how you came to know of the battle between the empire, ourselves and Strife?”

“We were in the area during the battle and it was Harry who deflected the first barrage of missiles.” answered Andrea truthfully

“You deflected the missiles, how?” asked the commander addressing Harry

“The moment is a bit foggy, I’m still not sure exactly what I did I just acted and let my magic do the rest.” answered Harry

“Liar”

“Quiet” snapped Harry mentally at the annoying guardian

”That is all for right now, I would like you three to remain here for a while in order for me to sort through this and to get a bearing on the current situation, I will talk with all of you more sometime soon, in the meantime I’ll have to ask you to excuse yourselves as I have work to do.”

As if on cue four SeeDs entered the room and the three companions were escorted out of the garden and led to the small town that was

growing in between the two demolished Gardens. They were led to a small building that looked to be a small house that had recently been finished.

"The commander wished for you three to stay here until further notice, you have free reign of the whole village barring the Gardens, that includes you as well Pryde, no one here will hesitate to take appropriate measures should you violate the orders set out for you."

"So basically, we're your prisoners." said Harry

"Don't be smart ass offworlder, I don't care what kind of fancy tricks you have, I'll still gut your sorry ass." said the SeeD nastily

"Sure you will mate." said Harry calmly "No need to worry, we'll cooperate, for now."

"I'm warning you..." said the same SeeD leaving the threat hanging

"If I were you I'd stop provoking him." said another SeeD in the group, this one seeming to have a bit more tact than his comrade "Forgive my associate's rudeness Mr. Potter, but for security reasons we must keep you confined, for your safety as well as ours."

"What's your name?" asked Harry to the SeeD who had just spoken, he had short cut blonde hair and pale skin, he had a narrow face and a small build compared to some of the other SeeDs around.

"Teagan Krypt at your service." said Teagan offering his hand, Harry accepted the offer and shook hands with the other man. "I'm sure the commander won't keep you waiting too long, she's just extremely busy having to manage almost two Gardens worth of SeeDs not to mention all the cadets running around."

"There are cadets here?" asked Andrea almost sounding alarmed

"It couldn't be helped." said Teagan "The battle happened so suddenly and there wasn't time to give the cadets a dock leave, it's really too bad since I don't know if we'll be leaving this area anytime soon. Anyway, we must be going, for your sakes I hope we have

you're cooperation as I'd hate for there to be any 'unpleasantness' added to this whole situation."

"As long as you don't hinder us you'll have nothing to worry about." assured Harry

"I'll be sure and relay that to the commander." said the first SeeD speaking up again "Let's go."

When the SeeDs had left Harry turned to his companions, "Well this is interesting."

"Looks like they don't trust you either." said Sheyna to Andrea

"It's expected" she said "I've been MIA for a long time now, I don't come back with my partner and I stumble on this outpost in the middle of nowhere, also what Duran said puts a whole new spin on this situation, I knew there was some corruption in the SeeD higher ups, but I never imagined it had gotten this bad."

"It is possible that she wasn't completely honest with us, you know we left out quite a few details on our side." said Harry "Who's to say she didn't do the same?"

"It's possible, and very probable as well." admitted Andrea "she doesn't trust any of us and we'll be watched very closely while we're here."

"How long are we staying?" asked Sheyna "You know what we came here to do."

"I say give it a couple days and see what happens," said Harry "We may be able to get some help or at the very least information about this area and the cyborgs."

"Awaken young mortal."

The voice had been nagging at him for a while now, he figured it had been a few hours, or maybe even a few days, it was hard to tell.

"Time is of the essence, you must move!" said the voice more urgently

His eyes fluttered a bit, but he couldn't make sense of any of the images that they were giving him. Everything was bright and his head hurt just trying to look at them.

"Your senses have been augmented by whatever those people did to you, you will need to get used to it very quickly."

"Pandamona?" asked Ethan mentally

"Good you're starting to come around." said the guardian "You're captors should be coming back soon, you should take this opportunity to learn about your surroundings and attempt to escape if you can."

"Seems like I've been doing a lot of that lately." said Ethan "What all did they do to me, can you tell?"

"They have replaced many of your organic components for artificial ones, most of your brain is still the same, though some of it was replaced as well."

"That would explain the headache" said Ethan "Why can't I move?"

"I do not know, you are unrestrained, but there may be other reasons."

Just then he heard a door opening and some people walked in. Someone walked over to where Ethan was lying and snapped their fingers, instantly his eyes shot open, despite the blinding pain. He saw what appeared to be a middle aged bald man in a white lab coat and black pants. When he saw the man's eyes he would have gasped if it weren't for the fact that he seemed to be incapable of moving his own body. The man's eyes were an eerie red like that of a laser and they were ringed by black giving them a sinister appearance.

"Stand up B-432!" he barked and involuntarily, Ethan obeyed.

“As I suspected all that poking around they did in your head made you loose control of yourself.” said Pandamona “I managed to keep your mind partially separated from your body so you wouldn’t loose yourself to whatever it is they did. You may be able to regain control, but I would advise that you wait until a more opportune time to try that.

“Good point, if I tried anything now they’d probably go poking around in my head again.” said Ethan

“Follow me.” barked the man. “We’re going to test out your new combat capabilities, I’ve never done this process on someone with your physical and magical capacities, even before you were converted you and your friends took out quite a few of my cyborgs.”

Ethan found himself walking down a long hallway, he was led into a large room that looked as if it could hold several large airships and still not be full. The man walked over to a wall and hit some hidden buttons, the room changed from being bare to a lush jungle landscape. Ethan was reminded of the training simulator back at Bessaid Garden and he could guess what was coming next.

“You will face one of my toughest creations, this fiend is not like any you have faced before. It should be very interesting to watch. Then the man disappeared and Ethan found himself standing alone in the simulated jungle. He heard a roar in the distance and the ground began to shake as something very large began to head his direction.

“So is now an opportune time?” asked Ethan

“They are likely still monitoring you and taking control now may not go unnoticed.” warned the wind guardian

“Your weapon is somewhere in this jungle.” said a voice over a hidden intercom “Find it and dispatch your enemy as quickly as possible. Begin now!”

Ethan felt himself begin to run around the jungle faster than he could have ever done before without using a haste spell. It didn’t take him long to find what he was looking for and he was a bit surprised to see

his spear lying on the ground between some bushes. They obviously wanted him to use a weapon he was familiar with, which was odd considering that he wasn't supposed to have any memory of who he used to be. This didn't stop his body from picking up the spear and heading toward the direction of his opponent.

Again it didn't take him long to get where he was going. He found himself facing a gigantic reptilian beast. It had 4 horns on each side of its head and its back was covered in large vicious looking spikes. It had an extremely long tail which was also adorned in smaller versions of the spikes. Its eyes were yellow and looked like that of a snake's and its massive saurian jaws were filled with 5 rows of razor sharp teeth. Its body was covered in sturdy looking blue scales and a long purple tongue hung out of its jaws, dripping a thick purple substance that hissed as it hit the ground, and to top it all off, the creature was at least ten times his size.

"Oh man" said Ethan mentally

It didn't take long for the creature to notice him and it lunged at him with quick precise strikes from its clawed hands. Ethan quickly jumped into the air going much higher than he normally would be able to. He brought his spear around so that the tip was facing the ground. As he started his decent he aimed himself toward the monster prepared to ram his spear straight through the creature's head. The monster wasn't going to let him win that easily though, and brought its long tail up and smacked him right out of the air.

Ethan landed on the ground hard enough to make a small crater, but he barely felt any pain from the impact. Instead he got up and prepared to attack again, this time channeling some magic into his spear and charging toward the monster at full speed. He struck the monster in the right leg before it could react. Then he followed up with a point black Blizzaga spell causing massive ice spikes to literally pry the beast's leg clean off at the knee. The monster roared in pain, but instead of toppling over as Ethan expected, it remained standing and to the SeeD's horror, its leg began to regenerate rapidly.

Ethan jumped backwards while firing a volley of Fira spells in quick succession at the creature. The monster dodged some but others

struck it all along its body. Suddenly the creature inhaled deeply before expelling a ball of the same purple substance that dripped from its jaws. Ethan nimbly maneuvered out of the way before the ball hit the spot where he'd just occupied. The impact created a small puddle of the purple substance that bubble and fizzled violently. Ethan was eternally thankful that his body had dodged that.

The SeeD raised his spear and prepared to charge again. This time when he was halfway to the monster he jumped into the air and channeled a massive amount of magical energy into his weapon. He saw the creature's tail coming his way and launched the spear at it. The impact created a massive explosion that sent Ethan flying in the opposite direction from the monster. He raised one of his hands and his spear immediately returned to him. He wasn't sure how that happened since he couldn't do that before, but he wasn't going to complain. Before the smoke from the explosion cleared, Ethan cast a Flare spell hoping to end the battle. He heard the monster screech with pain and fury as the spell did its work. When the spell cleared away the monster was left blacked and missing its tail as well as a good portion of both its legs.

"Enough!" barked the voice of the same man that had initiated the battle. The area returned to the bare room and only Ethan and the monster remained. "You did quite well against my Devilsaur, I expect great things from you B-432. Now you may rest." And with those last words Ethan found himself losing consciousness once again.

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A/N: Well better late than never right? This chapter took far longer to come out than I had ever thought it would, but it's done and I hope you enjoyed it, not a bunch of action but it sets up the next chapter nicely. Speaking of the next chapter, I'll say right now that I have no ETA for it just that when it's done it will be uploaded and not before then. I appreciate all the reviews and PMs about this story they really give me a drive to work on it, but I can do without the "Update or else" messages. To those of you who left such a message I say to you this: "Or else what?"

Technical Difficulties

The past week had been a very stressful one for Andrea Pryde. The tense atmosphere of the SeeD encampment was not an overall friendly one. She was looked at with distrust and resentment by many of her peers, she was thankful that none of them knew her secret, If they found out she was a sorceress, the distrust would probably turn to fear and from there they'd all be trying to kill her. That was another good reason not to use her powers, the more experienced SeeDs would be able to sense that kind of magic being used this close to them, so no matter how much Harry tried to convince her that learning to get used to them was the best idea, she had to disagree.

That was another thing that was bothering her. Harry had been acting odd, odder than usual and for him that couldn't mean anything good. She wasn't one to try and pry, but she was well aware that Sheyna had tried figuring out what was troubling the wizard, and had so far hadn't gotten much out of him. Andrea had her suspicions and whatever was bothering him probably had something to do with his late night excursions away from the base.

It always looked like he was in his bed, but a close observation one could see the slightly translucent features of the illusion he placed on his bed every night. None of the other SeeDs seem to notice and if they did no one said anything. Being cramped up in this base was starting to get to her, she needed something to take her mind off it, she was heading to the commander's office to request a fiend patrol or anything to get away from her own thoughts when there was a loud whistling sound quickly followed by an earth shattering explosion from the main entrance of the makeshift compound.

Every SeeD was instantly on alert and the higher ranking SeeDs began issuing orders to their fellow soldiers, obviously they had been through something like this before. She saw a red haired SeeD she recognized and called out to him.

"Dincht what the hell is going on?" she yelled over the growing noise

"Cyborg attack! what the hell do you thi-...oh it's you." he finished with a deadpan drawl "Just take that gunblade of yours and start

using it if any of those damned things break through the first line of defenders.”

He ran off without another word and Andrea resolved to do whatever she could to help her fellow SeeDs while tracking down Harry and Sheyna.

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There goes another one Laguna.” said Bastian holding the binoculars to his eyes, the optical enhancers were more powerful than anything he’d ever used before and allowed him to see up to 5 miles away at their strongest setting, that was why he was able to see a large battalion of cyborgs heading north from the direction of the main city. This had been happening a lot in recent weeks even before their ill fated broadcasting mission. He found it very odd. They would always return a few hours after passing with noticeably thinner numbers and if they were close enough, often times Bastian would see heavy damage to the returning ones, whatever they were doing they weren’t having too much success.

The difference this time though was that there were a lot more cyborgs than usual, a battalion had passed only an hour before and still hadn’t returned.

“They can’t be up to anything good.” said Laguna coming to stand beside him.

“That’s what I was thinking.” said Bastian worriedly “I think it’s time we see what they’re up to.”

“They aren’t attacking us, that’s all we need to worry about.” said Laguna “We don’t have the resources right now to do much of anything but lay low until we get an opportunity to acquire some more.”

“But there could be potential allies up there that their trying to destroy.” Argued Bastian “What if it’s someone who heard the broadcast and is coming in to try and help?”

"I understand what you mean, but you're suggesting that we engage all of them in open combat, with no idea who or what their fighting against." said Laguna "They could be more enemies, then what?"

"I'm only suggesting we stay at a safe distance and observe." said Bastian

"I'll let you take a vehicle but that's all I can offer you right now." said Laguna "Just get back here is all I ask, you've been a good ally, I'd hate to loose you now."

"Don't worry I won't do anything rash." said Bastian, but it was doubtful that Laguna believed him.

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Harry sat deep in thought near the north end of the SeeD base. He was behind the Garden's and no one was likely to disturb him here, not even his watchers. It was odd being watched again, but this time they weren't trying to protect him, they were watching him with suspicion and distrust. "Well at least they don't dote on me." he thought wryly. They were doing an admirable job of trying to remain undetected, but he knew they were there, having learned to tell when Grindewald watched him, these two weren't a real challenge to track. Now they stood on the roof of the Western Garden, he couldn't remember the exact name, and they were still watching him very closely.

His guards weren't the most pressing thing on his mind though, he had managed to gather a great deal of information since his time at the SeeD compound and not all of it was to his liking. He was no where near the computer genius Ethan was, but he'd learned to use the ones in this world well enough, and with a little magic on his side, he'd managed to come by a good deal of facts about this world that he didn't know before.

For instance the way GF worked, in the simplest terms they worked similar to Materia. The specific guardian put an echo of their presence into a stone disk-like device that could then be equipped to a person via "Junctioning" as the person fought with the GF their

connection to it grows stronger enhancing their own power and the amount of will the guardian can express on this plane in it's physical form. One thing had been confusing him when he'd seen multiple images of the same GF during the fight between the Empire, Strife and the Gardens. The file on GF he'd found also explained that phenomenon. Junctioning stones as they were called divided over time after an extended use. The new stone had a much weaker link to the GF than the one it had divided from but could still be used in the same way, and even with multiple conduits to this world a summoned guardian could act through multiple conduits at the same time, albeit with a much weaker result than acting through the one conduit with full power. There was still much about the topic that was unlisted in the archive and he supposed that he'd have to ask a Guardian to get the full understanding of it all.

Unfortunately the SeeD computer system, or at least the

portion of it that the base had did not have very many files on the Merger only vague references to something called Time Compression and a Sorceress Ultimecia, nothing at all on how to go between worlds or anything of that nature. That was why he'd called up a map of the surrounding area and had begun scouting it out during the night when it was much easier to slip away unnoticed.

He found several installations while roaming around the Eshar wilderness. The security in them was tight though, and he'd had little headway in finding any information within the outposts, he knew that such a thing was a long shot, but he had to try. Sheyna kept asking him about what was troubling him, but he didn't want to tell her about it right now, especially not with so many unfriendly ears around.

His moment of tranquility was shattered by the sound of an explosion and the shouting of all the SeeDs throughout the rest of the base, he felt a shift in the tracking charm he'd placed on his watchers and knew that they were now moving away from him to investigate whatever had happened on the south end. He decided that he'd better go as well to see what was happening.

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The base was complete chaos, cyborgs fought with SeeDs everywhere. By the main entrance, in the forest surrounding the base, on the roofs of the crashed Gardens and everywhere in between the battle raged. Several SeeDs were already seriously injured or

worse dead. The cyborgs had lost a lot of units as well and for a time it seemed as though the SeeDs would win in the end, that was until another battalion appeared.

Andrea fought alongside a group of SeeDs as they fought twelve cyborgs, making the odds three to one in favor of the machines. One of the soldiers had an arm dangling uselessly at his side, and another one was limping badly. Andrea had her fair share of scratches and bruises but this was nothing a quick Cura couldn't take care of. She cast the spell on all four of them, her wounds closed rapidly leaving only faint markings as any sign that they had been there. The others surveyed themselves and found that they too were not nearly in as bad of shape as they had been. They nodded to her gratefully for the assistance and together they began to dispatch the cyborgs. Andrea noticed though that they only used magic sparingly as if they had precious little to bother using it fighting. She needed to talk to someone about that after this was over, that was not a good sign at all.

She turned quickly to avoid a slice from one of the enemies that would have beheaded her had she not avoided it. Bring her gunblade up she parried a second attack from another cyborg and counted it slicing clean through its chest and causing sparks to angle all throughout its body. She viciously wrenched the weapon free pulling its trigger as she did so sending a powerful blast into its head and disabling it permanently. She cast a powerful Thundaga spell on four of the machines causing them to falter in their action and gave her the opportunity to get in their midst quickly hacking them to pieces. The others had managed to take out the remaining cyborgs.

Using the short reprieve Andrea decided to take a quick look at these SeeDs' junctions. They were all using low level GF which had limited junctioning capacities. They had little to no magic in their reserves and one didn't have a GF at all. It was what she had feared. The SeeDs were seriously under supplied to be where they were and it

was a wonder that they had survived this long. She saw glints of Materia on some of their weapons and armor but even that was few and far between. Now that she thought about it the weapons weren't in great shape either, some bore cracks and worn edges the armor showed signs of taking heavy damage and little if any of it looked capable of protecting the wearer.

"No not good." thought Andrea "not good at all"

Fifteen more cyborgs came barreling toward them and the fight began once again. This time Andrea decided to give her four companions more of an edge focusing on her magical reserves she brought forth several protection and enhancement spells. Protect and Shell helping to negate physical and magical damage. Haste, increasing their speed and dexterity and therefore helping their reaction time greatly and finally Regen to handle any minor damage they might receive while fighting. After giving all of them the spells she barely had time to avoid the attacks of three cyborgs that had launched some long range laser fire at her. It seemed that they had determined her as the greater threat because six more cyborgs began coming toward her from the other group that was fighting the three other SeeDs. The Cyborgs surrounded her and didn't attack right away, it was like they were thinking, and that was not typical of normal machines. Three of them charged at her from different angles, she jumped into the air expecting them to collide with each other, instead the ones remaining in the circle around her, fired lasers at her while the other three jumped after her, two of them grabbed her, and restrained her with inhuman strength. The volley of laser fire hit its mark. The attack would have killed her if she hadn't cast the Shell and Protect spells on herself; they still burned her very badly where they struck and they hurt like hell. The third cyborg that had jumped after her had apparently gone for a high jump and came down with a devastating dropkick to her head sending her plummeting toward the ground. She was going at an astonishing speed and instinct seemed to take over as she thrust her hands towards the ground causing her course to change as a powerful blast of wind left her hand. She knew she didn't have any spells like that in her reserves, but she didn't stop to think about that at the moment. She landed safely on the ground and cast a quick Curaga on herself dulling the pain in her head and healing over her various burns in order to be ready for the cyborgs

that were already advancing on her position with four more in their midst. She chanced a glance over to where the other SeeDs had been fighting and gave an involuntary shudder at the battered bodies of her comrades. They'd managed to take out one of the Cyborgs between them with even with the spells she'd cast on them, this either meant that they were horrible fighters or that these cyborgs weren't like the others. . It was probably a combination of the two and the fact that these SeeDs were seriously unprepared for this situation. She charged up a strong Thundaga spell as she waited for just the right moment to unleash it. The cyborgs were going for a pincer attack once again, as soon as they got into position she'd let loose.

The moment came a few seconds later and the attack sent the cyborgs flying in all directions. They seemed to be recovering quickly and Andrea decided to press her advantage while she could. She focused lightning into her gunblade and attacked the nearest machines with renewed fury tearing it asunder and causing a small explosion from its ruined remains. Her hand slammed into the ground releasing a massive quake spell that ripped a deep chasm ahead of her catching five more machines before slamming shut over and over before closing again. The other cyborgs backed away weary of her.

She could see the decimated SeeDs all over the battlefield, they'd lost a lot today and the battle seemed to be a losing one if the cyborgs got anymore reinforcements. She heard a horrible roar echo all around the base and knew that whatever it belonged to probably wasn't on their side. Further pondering was put on hold when she heard a faint whirring sound from behind her a quick glance showed seven new arrivals, cyborgs armed with pulsing plasma blades, others with glowing rotary blades. This situation had gone from bad to worse and she was right in the middle of it.

...

Sheyna back flipped out of her position narrowly avoiding the incoming volley of laser fire from the cyborgs that had chosen her as their target. The roof of Galbadia Garden had seemed like the perfect place to gain an advantage on the incoming forces, but unfortunately she has not counted on their resilience, shots that would have killed normal humans barely caused them to falter, it was only thanks to her

magic that she'd managed to kill any of them. They had uncanny maneuverability as well, vaulting onto the roof had been no trouble for them at all, and staying ahead of them was taking everything she had.

"If only I still had that automatic laser cannon." she thought bitterly as she dodged another barrage of fire before letting loose with a volley of her own. She took cover in an alcove of the roof in order to give herself some cover and a momentary respite. She checked her clips once more and cursed. The armor piercing rounds weren't cutting it, and while she had an extended supply thanks to Harry they weren't doing the kind of damage that would take these things down. The normal ammo was out of the question and with no demolition ammo there was only one option, however risky, it was the only thing that would get her out of this situation. She reached into her ammo bag and brought out a single clip, it was black with a dark purple strip running down either side of it. She slammed it into her right pistol in place of the armor piercing ammo. Listening carefully she judged her enemies to be around twenty yards away, she chanced a quick look and was immediately set upon by their laser fire, keeping her pinned to her position. When the fire ceased she made a quick dive out of her hiding place and fired rapidly with both pistols. The normal shots simply pinged off the superior armor of the cyborgs, but the other shots had a far more destructive effect. When each of the purple tipped bullets hit their target, they burst into a large sphere of black and purple energy which caused the cyborgs to convulse and disintegrate without a trace, unfortunately it did the same thing to the Garden roof underneath them and Sheyna's pistol had not been able to withstand the backlash from such powerful blasts in quick succession. The weapons barrel had exploded. Luckily Sheyna had thrown it away from herself beforehand saving herself from injury, but still down a weapon. The good thing was that all the cyborgs had been caught in the blast leaving the roof deserted.

She heard a scream coming from below and ran to ward the holes now in the garden roof. Below several cyborgs and even some fiends were chasing some kids around. She remembered Teagan telling them that there were cadets here, but she had no idea they were that young, the kids looked about 8 maybe even younger. Not wasting any time she jumped down through the whole blasting a Firaga spell at the oncoming machines, stalling them long enough for her to cast a

Blizzaga spell at the ceiling above causing it to collapse onto the cyborgs that had stalled due to the intense heat burning in their path.

“What the hell lady now we’re trapped!” yelled one of the cadets, a tanned boy with dark brown hair and brown eyes. “Are you trying to get us killed?!”

“Shut it kid!” said Sheyna irritably “The Cyborgs won’t be held up by that for long, we need to get you guys somewhere safe!”

“We were headed to the armory.” said another boy timidly “It has strong doors and stuff we figured it’d be safe.”

“Where is it?” Sheyna prodded gently

“It’s on the other side of the fucking pile you dropped on those damn robots!” snapped the first boy snidely “Fine job you’re doing of ‘protecting you poor children’ huh?”

At this point Sheyna had had enough. She yanked the boy up by his collar and looked him right in the eye. “I said shut it, now if you don’t have anything constructive to add to the situation then this mouth of yours better remain shut, do I make myself clear?”

The kid looked to be ready to make another flippant remark, but a loud roar from outside stilled whatever comment he was going to make and he nodded reluctantly. Sheyna sat him down. She didn’t know what that noise was but she had a feeling it wasn’t anything good. Now she needed to find another way to the armory and manage to keep all these kids safe along the way with only one pistol and her magic. This would not be easy.

...

Following his guards had proved to be yet another of his grand plans gone wrong. After getting about a mile east of camp the guards had suddenly been ambushed and then brutally killed by the cyborg army. Harry, while being invisible at the time, had somehow gathered their attention and was their next target, however he was prepared, unlike the guards. The first ten cyborgs to attack him had met a quick end

from a powerful Thundaga spell. Several of the cyborgs broke rank and attempted to flank him, but he used several Quake spells to head them off, this didn't seem to deter them however as they quickly vaulted the small canyons formed by the spell and shrug off the violent vibrations of the ground around them.

Instead of flanking him, they continued onward toward the SeeD camp. Harry wanted to stop them but he was preoccupied by several cyborgs that stood out from the rest. These had odd circular devices on their hands and he was a bit worried about the look of them. Wanting to end it quickly he attempted a powerful Tornado spell, but instead of blowing the machines to pieces, the spell was simply absorbed by the devices on the cyborgs' hands.

Harry was a little annoyed by that, but some fiends did the same thing, but there was one thing he was sure they wouldn't absorb.

"Explodra!" The dark red bolt of magic soared toward the cyborgs, but just before it hit, two of the monstrosities raised their hands and sucked the magic into themselves, leaving Harry dumbfounded. THAT had never happened before. He unsheathed his gunblade and Summoned the Atma Weapon in the other, if he couldn't do this with magic, he'd just have to use brute force.

He had to admit these robots were better than he thought machines could ever be. Instead of waiting for him to attack, they rushed him. Attacking from four different angles, he attempted to jump at the last second, barely avoiding the machines as they changed direction, doing the exact opposite of what Harry had been hoping for, out of habit he launched a strong Flare spell towards the group, they brought up their hands to absorb the attack, but only managed to reduce about half of the damage, this let Harry know that their devices had limits, all he had to do was overload them, that wouldn't be much of a problem.

Landing Harry put on a sudden burst of speed and slashed the bots with magically charged blade strikes. When the bots tried to absorb the magical energy they paid no heed to the physical damage being wrought by the gunblade and Atma Weapon. It wasn't long before Harry had disposed of the last of them, only to hear a startlingly loud

roar from very close by; he looked in the direction of the cry of primal fury to see a most terrifying creature. It had once clearly been a species similar to the T-Rexaur he'd seen in the Bessaid training grounds, but it had several new additions. It was much bigger, had two heads, wings, spikes along its spine going to the tip of its tail and horns on both its heads. If that wasn't enough he could see that it had several mechanical additions as well, such as metal tipped claws, horns and spikes, as well as a metal tip on its tail. The eyes didn't quite look natural either, this was one nasty looking creature.

The thing charged Harry at surprising speed for something of its size. He barely managed another dodge feeling the acrid breath on him as one of the creature's maws came within centimeters of his arm. He slashed at its flank, only to be batted away by the massive tail. The snake-like appendage wrapped around him upon impact and slammed him brutally into the ground several times before letting him go and turning to take another bite at him. Harry surprised the beast with a Firaga spell. The spell barely caused the beast to waver, but gave Harry enough of a chance to get away from the incoming jaws of doom. He couldn't afford to let this fight go on much longer. Summoning up some of his vast magical reserves he summoned an extremely strong Meteor spell onto the unfortunate beast. It let out another roar before collapsing to the ground in a charred and battered heap.

Harry sighed in relief hoping that was the last of it, unfortunately he heard another deafening roar, only this time there sounded like more than one of them this time. He glanced over his shoulder, not at all liking what he saw. There were four more of those dinosaur-cyborg fiends. This was going to be difficult. Another wave of the humanoid cyborgs flew past him some taking a few shots at him, but not directly engaging him. This was not good. He was dealing with these vicious and very strong fiends, and there were several battalions of cyborgs heading towards the SeeD camp. The soldiers would have their hands full with the cyborgs, if they had to deal with these things too it would be a disaster.

"Andrea won't use too much magic because she's still afraid of using the sorceress powers." He thought worriedly as he dodged an incoming volley of acid spat from two of the new fiends. "And Sheyna

only has her gun, which won't do much and Materia, I hope they can handle themselves..."

Thoughts of his companions were put on hold as he evaded a spout of fire from one beast and a spurt of acid fired by another. "And it just keeps getting better" He thought somberly before casting a series of spells on himself to help him deal with this situation easier. Charging into the beasts was out of the question, they would have little trouble tearing him apart at close range, and while he was confident in his speed, especially now bolstered with a Haste spell, he wasn't quite confident that he could avoid all harm from the vicious monsters. He needed to separate them since using the more devastating spells in his arsenal would expend more energy than he felt comfortable using since he had no idea what else he would have to face today.

"Try a Berserk spell on them" suggested Seth "They're less likely to spit at you then, they'll only think about ripping you apart with those claws, then you can run away and make them chase you, kill the first one that catches up with you."

"And if they're immune to Berserk?" asked Harry evading more plumes of fire and acid and back peddling to avoid getting smashed by another of the beasts' tails.

"If all else you could summon me or Zero." Suggested the Guardian

"For all I know these could be the grunts, I'm sure there's something close to here controlling them, the things are working pretty well together with those cyborgs" Harry cast the berserk spell on one of the fiends, unfortunately it didn't seem to do anything at all "Nope didn't work, no way I can outrun them with them having a ranged advantage over me. Guess I got no choice here then." He began gathering his magic for one of his more devastating attacks. If they survived this, he wasn't quite sure what he'd do, but this was a start. One of the beasts was preparing to charge him, and Harry released his spell before the thing took two steps. "ULTIMA!"

...

Andrea was quickly becoming exhausted. She'd managed to take out the next wave of Cyborgs, but she was quickly running out of stocked magic. She couldn't afford to keep blowing the spells she had junctioned in order to defeat the cyborgs, that left her with engaging them at close range, which left her far more vulnerable to their close ranged attacks as well. On top of that, she kept getting an urge that she wasn't sure she could ignore for much longer. The power that had been lying dormant within her for weeks now was itching to be released, and it was becoming very hard to resist.

She flipped over two charging cyborgs and quickly turned and slashed them with her gunblade using the contained explosive force of the blade to tear right through their armored torsos. There was no relief however as four more of the deadly machines were heading her direction as well as something else. The thing looked like an Adamantoise, a large turtle-like creature, with spikes on its shell and powerful legs as well as tusks on its grotesque head. This was not a normal one though. It was much larger than any she'd seen before and it was clearly enhanced by cybernetic implants.

Ifrit would help here, but she wasn't confident she could summon him quickly enough, she had not been using him for very long meaning her connection with him was nowhere near as strong as it had been with Quazicotl. Still she had to try. Focusing on the Guardian she channeled energy in an attempt to call him forth. Unfortunately the Cyborgs had other ideas and she had to break her focus in order to combat the deadly machines once again. Parrying a slash from one of the machine's plasma blades she beheaded it and jumped to avoid a barrage of laser fire from two others. She felt a presence looming behind her and quickly dodged to the side narrowly avoiding a plume of frigid air coming from the Adamantoise's huge mouth. The Cyborgs weren't so lucky though, they'd been charging after her, and the breath attack froze them solid and a second later they shattered.

Andrea was at her limit, she had spent all the stocked magic she could afford and her magical reserves were at their limit as well, making casting materia spells almost impossible. She didn't have enough time to summon Ifrit, and even if she did, she wasn't sure how long she could hold him into this plane with such a limited supply of magic. She felt the pulse of power within her again, and she

couldn't resist it any longer. A surge of magical energy surged through her and if anyone could see her face they'd notice that her green eyes had turned a solid shade of white as the power flowed through her. Her wounds healed and the exhaustion slowly started to fade away. The Adamantoise was not detoured however and prepared to launch another plume of frigid breath at her, however a quick thrust of her hand in its direction sent the beast flying back several hundred yards end over end. It struggled to raise itself off the ground but with another gesture, huge spikes of stone jutted from the ground underneath it causing it to roar in agony. Andrea didn't let up however and cast a very powerful lightning spell on the beast. Unfortunately this proved to be the wrong thing to do. Instead of hurting the monster the spell seemed to invigorate it.

The large turtle-like creature pulled itself to its feet, still impaled on the spikes, but with a large amount of effort it broke free, still with several stone spikes running through its body. It charged at Andrea and the sorceress blasted it with a powerful Flare spell. When the spell cleared there was nothing left of the creature, not even ashes. There were still cyborgs about, and the battle was far from over. The power was flowing through her and she was barely in control, her only thought was defeating her enemy and that's exactly what she did.

...

"What's under this room?" Asked Sheyna urgently. She could hear the cyborgs attempting to get through the barrier she'd created and they needed a way out before the machines broke through.

"I think the dormitories." said one of the female cadets uncertainly.

"Any chance someone's in there?" She asked loading another of her precious few demolition clips into her gun.

"There shouldn't be." Said the flippant cadet "I don't see why you-..." He quickly jumped back when Sheyna blasted a hole into the floor "You're crazy!"

"I'm trying to keep us alive so shut the hell up and do what I tell you" Sheyna said impatiently jumping into the new hole she'd created

“Jump down, and watch the shrapnel and rubble!” she yelled through up at them. Some of the cadets hesitated but a shifting in the rubble from the collapsed roof made up their minds and they quickly followed her.

The dormitory was thankfully deserted and the hallway outside it was clear of any enemies as well. When the last cadet cot through the hole Sheyna quickly ushered them out of the room and welded the door shut with a Fira spell in order to hold up the cyborgs as much as possible.

“Is there a way up the armory from this floor?” she asked

“The elevator, if it still works.” said the flippant cadet again

“What’s your name kid?” asked Sheyna

“Trent” was the simple reply

“Alright then Trent you lead the way, I hope you can cast some spells though, just in case.”

“I’ll manage,” he said simply heading down the hallway with Sheyna and the other cadets quickly following.

Sheyna didn’t know what to make of the kid. He obviously had an attitude problem, but now was not the time to say anything about it. They needed to get to the armory, hopefully there was something useful in there. At the very least some ammunition as she was running low on the specialty bullets and the normal ones didn’t seem to phase the bots at all. She still had her materia and a very limited bit of white magic she could cast without materia or junction. There was also Leviathan if it was necessary, but in this enclosed area, she hoped that it wouldn’t be needed. They reached the elevator without incident, unfortunately it wasn’t working.

“The lift is on this floor, but it won’t be going anywhere.” Said Trent
“Any bright ideas lady?”

“Sheyna, and yeah, we’re going to have to climb up there.” Replied Sheyna I’m going to blast open the doors, Trent you go up first and open the doors on the next floor, you do have a spell that can do that don’t you?”

“I’ll manage” he said simply

Sheyna blasted the doors with one of her three remaining demolition shells to open the door. Trent went in and blasted the grate off the roof of the elevator cart with an Aero spell, and quickly made his way up the shaft. The other cadets followed while Sheyna watched the rear. As the last cadet was scrambling up the shaft Sheyna heard a loud explosion coming from the direction of where they’d entered this floor and seconds later saw the first of undoubtedly many cyborgs making their way toward her position. She blasted them with a Blizzaga spell, but they absorbed it and kept advancing, cursing she fired a demolition shell at the first cyborg and followed it up with a powerful Aeroga spell, the concentrated blast of wind wasn’t something that the machines seemed able to absorb and the force of the spell sent them flying back. Using the opportunity she saw that the last of the cadets had made it up so she began the climb herself. Getting to the next floor, she saw the doors had been blown off, most likely by an Aero spell and made her way into the hallway. The cadets were looking around uncertainly waiting for some kind of order.

Sheyna waited for the cyborgs to make their way into the elevator cart, when she saw one preparing to climb up she blasted the cable holding the cart and it crashed down to the bottom of the shaft taking several of the machines with it.

“Trent, go! We need to get to the armory now!” Ordered Sheyna urgently.

Trent began moving immediately heading down the hall making a left turn at a t-junction and stopping outside a room with a keypad lock on it. Sheyna wondered why he stopped until he looked at her and explained

"I don't know the entry code." He stated simply "I don't think you'll be able to blast your way in either, it's reinforced against explosions and has some magic resistance too."

Sheyna bit her lip in contemplation, this was their best shot and the cyborgs wouldn't be held up much longer. She began just pushing buttons on the console randomly hoping to get lucky. A loud beep sounded and a surge of electricity surged through her, not enough to knock her out, but enough to let her know that trying that was a bad idea.

"Yeah we should have warned you about that." One of the cadets said sheepishly

Sheyna coughed up before casting a Cura spell on herself and turned to the cadets "If none of you knew the code, why were you heading here. Before any of them could answer the door to the armory opened and Sheyna sighed in relief when she saw it was Teagan.

"Good this is the last of the cadets" He said relieved as well "Quick get in here!"

The cadets wasted no time going in and Sheyna quickly followed them, Teagan shut the door and Sheyna took the opportunity to slump against the wall taking a deep breath.

"I think it's safe to say the situation is pretty bad out there." Said Teagan "This is the worst attack yet."

"So this has happened before?" asked Sheyna

"About every eight days or so since we landed here, never this bad though." replied Teagan "Thanks for getting the cadets here, protocol is for them to get to one of the secure rooms like this during an attack. I was in the Garden taking care of something for the commander when the attack started, so I started rounding up as many undergrads as possible to make sure nothing happened to them."

Sure enough there were about twenty-five cadets in the room including the ones Sheyna had helped get here. She noticed that the

armory looked kind of bare not much was here, the odd gunblade or sword as well as some other spare weapons, but she did see something that caught her interest, heading over to the limited ammunition she found that there was some Dark Ammo mixed in with the normal and armor piercing rounds.

“Not much here for an armory.” she noted as she loaded a clip of Dark Ammo into her pistol. She saw that there was a semi-automatic handgun on one of the shelves and picked it up to use as well, loading it with some armor piercing rounds.

“It’s not like we’re in much of a position to restock.” said Teagan dryly “We barely had enough junction discs to go around, only three real GFs from both Gardens and what Materia we did have is already distributed. Our armor and weapons have been taking a beating thanks to the attacks, so we’ve been holding out with what we can.”

“So what do we do now?” asked Trent “Hold up in here and wait for them to come in and rip us apart?”

A few of the other cadets shivered at this and Sheyna sent the boy a withering look “I don’t know what your problem is kid, but now is not the time for that kind of talk.” she told him irritably “Our best bet is to hold up in here for as long as we can. The machines will have some trouble getting into this room and if they do we’ll be in a better position to hold them off with them only having one way in.”

He looked unconvinced, and Sheyna wasn’t really convinced herself, but if the last few years had taught her anything it was that there was always a chance as long as you kept trying. She hoped Harry and Andrea were faring better than she was.

...

Bastian drove the ATV as fast as he could in order to catch up to the battalion he’d seen heading north. Sophia sat beside him in quiet contemplation. She hadn’t said much since he’d told her about what he and Laguna had seen. She actually had been saying much lately at all, but he assumed she was worried about Ethan, and that feeling was more than mutual. As they neared the border of the woods he

say smoke rising in the air. He stopped the ATV at the very edge of the woods and hopped out drawing his broadsword. Sophia followed suit with her crossbow at the ready. It wasn't long before they found the place where the cyborgs made their base of operations, the vehicles they'd used to get to the forest were arranged around the perimeter of a small clearing where a few of them had set up some strange machines. There were some empty cages that undoubtedly housed some of the mutated fiends they'd come across in their time on this continent.

"Wonder what they're doing here" whispered Bastian

"Whatever it is I'm sure we won't like it." said Sophia quietly

A bright flash of light went off in the distance several different colors flashing in quick succession drawing the duo's attention away from the camp and deeper into the forest.

"I think that's where the fighting is." noted Bastian "We should head that way."

They crept away from the cyborg outpost and headed deeper into the woods, the native fiends to the area were absent, undoubtedly already dead, based on the corpses of some they'd come across, or scared off by the intrusion of so many people into the forest. Whatever the case was, Bastian was thankful he didn't have to fight any of them on his way to the battle he knew he was headed into. Bastian didn't know what to expect to see when he finally found the battle, but what he saw was the last thing he expected to see.

Harry Potter stood over the blackened remains of some sort of fiend and he was panting heavily. He had several wounds and he looked exhausted. He was undoubtedly the source of the spell they'd seen from a distance. Throwing caution to the wind he approached him, Sophia following closely behind him.

"Harry?" He asked uncertainly

The wizard turned preparing to cast a spell, but relaxed when he saw who it was. "I'm not sure how you got here, but we could really use

your help right about now.” Said the wizard tiredly. Sophia tossed him a potion which he drank gratefully. “Ethan’s not with you?”

Bastian was silent for a moment before replying “We’ll talk about that later, what’s going on here?”

“There’s a SeeD base up there, well two crashed Gardens that were functioning like an outpost since we saw them at the attack in Glacia.” Said Harry “The cyborgs started attacking though, and they brought some nasty fiends with them.” He gestured to the piles of smoldering flesh “There are a bunch of cyborgs I took out a few but most of them ignored me when the fiends showed up.”

“Let’s go then.” said Bastian “I may be a ‘traitor’ but I don’t think it really matters at this point.”

“I’m definitely not turning down the help.” said Harry “I hope Sheyna and Andrea are alright.”

“Andrea is with you?” asked Sophia “Thank Hyne, I was so worried about her when Antym sent us out of the sorceress’ tower.”

“Antym got you out?” asked Harry surprised “Know what we can catch up later let’s go.”

...

When they got to the Gardens the scene that met them was complete chaos. Cyborgs were lying destroyed all around as well as several SeeDs either severely to critically injured or simply dead. Others were still fighting all around the area even on top of the Gardens.

“Sophia try to tend to some of the injured.” said Bastian “If we can get any of them up and fighting again it will help.”

She nodded and got to work on the task of saving as many as she could, thankfully she kept a very large supply of healing magic and was able to cast some without the aid of junctions or materia. Bastian and Harry got into the fray dispatching cyborgs wherever they found them. It wasn’t long before they found Andrea. She was probably

single handedly turning the tide for the SeeDs in the area. The machines didn't stand a chance against the magical onslaught she was unleashing on them. A few enhanced fiends had also clearly been destroyed and when Harry and Bastian joined the battle the cyborgs' numbers were clearly taking a dent, but they were still severely outnumbered.

Harry was impressed at the display of power Andrea was showing, but he was worried at the ferocity she was showing, usually in battle she had a sort of controlled calm about her, even when in trance in the battle with Sorceress Mia she had been in a sort of controlled fury, but now her spells were so destructive and she was wielding them with such reckless abandon. More than once he saw her almost catch an unprepared SeeD with a stray spell, though thankfully that hadn't happened yet.

The Cyborgs on the Garden seemed to be meeting little resistance so that's where Harry headed using his magic to enhance himself in order to jump onto the roof of Galbadia Garden. There were several holes in the roof already, meaning that some cyborgs were inside. He knew that there were some cadets in the Gardens in that worried him even more; kids should not be in this kind of situation.

He was getting tired of fighting and he knew that the SeeDs that could still fight had to be at their limits as well. The attack had been going on for close to two hours now and it had been forty-five minutes since the last cyborg reinforcements had come. Their numbers were now about three to one in their favor instead of the twenty to one it had been when the machines had first shown up. Suddenly some of the cyborgs outside started to retreat. Others remained engaged with their opponents but the rest simply stopped what they were doing and ran away from the battle. Some began jumping from the holes in the roof, Harry took out a few but most of them managed to slip away. Soon there were only a handful left and it wasn't long before they had completely vacated the area. Everyone still remained on guard though expecting them to keep attacking. Except that Andrea, she was caught up in battle and didn't want her enemy to get away. Harry cursed and jumped from the roof chasing after her.

He managed to catch her at the edge of the compound attempting to reason with her "You need to calm down" He said commandingly, but she ignored him, attempting to push past him, but he grabbed her arm.

"Let me go!" She snarled trying to wrench her arm free

"That's enough, the battle is over, and we need to work on recovering now while we have the chance." he said

"They all must be destroyed!" She shouted eyes ablaze

"Control yourself!" he shouted back "You can't let the power get to you, it served its purpose so it's time calm it down, or better yet why not work on healing some of these injured people?"

Andrea took a deep breath, and for a moment it seemed she was going to listen to him, but then she blasted him away from here with a wave of magic. Harry quickly got to his feet and apparated in front of her before she could get too far away and hit her with a strong stunner catching her as she fell unconscious. Hopefully when she woke up she'd be in control again. The attack was over, but now they needed to regroup and fast, if there was another attack any time soon there wouldn't be much they could do.

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A/N: Well yeah it's been a while huh? I told you I wasn't gonna abandon this fic, just that I had a lot going on, and playing WOW (World of Warcraft) takes up a lot of time when you let it, sorry about that I really am, on top of that I had a nasty nasty case of writer's block, but the creative juices seem to be flowing again and that's good. There isn't a lot left in this part of the story maybe eight to ten more chapters depending on how much content I get into each chapter. Again I'm not abandoning the fic, it might be a little while before I update again, but I am going to try to get another chapter out before this fic has another birthday, I might even get one out before New Years, but I'm not promising anything. Please Leave me a review I appreciate them and they do motivate me to keep going, I

probably lost some readers by taking so long though. Until next time guys.